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Title Page

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Dissertation: 'Reading Between the Lines, 1839-1939: Popular Narratives of the Afghan Frontier'

Degree: PhD, English

Disclaimer 1: I hereby declare that the following thesis titled 'Reading Between the Lines, 1839-1939: Popular Narratives of the Afghan Frontier', is all my own work and no part of it has previously been submitted for a degree or other qualification to this or any other university or institution, nor has any material previously been published.

Disclaimer 2: I hereby declare that the following thesis titled 'Reading Between the Lines, 1839-1939: Popular Narratives of the Afghan Frontier' is within the word limit for PhD theses as stipulated by the Research School and Arts Faculty, The Open University.

Date: 18 September 2013

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Shane Malhotra'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S'.

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For their generous assistance in helping me access ledgers, manuscripts and unpublished material, I want to thank the archivists of the following collections: the Asia, Pacific and Africa Collection (APAC), British Library, London; the Bentley archive, British Library, London; the Blackwood archive, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; the Fawcett archive, the Women's Library, London; the Hodder and Stoughton archive, Guildhall Library, London; and the John Murray archive, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

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Reading Between the Lines, 1839-1939:
Popular Narratives of the Afghan Frontier.

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Abbreviations

These abbreviations are first used in the respective chapters in which they form a substantial part of the discussion. The use of single words, as substitutes for book titles, are restricted to the key texts studied in this thesis.

AP - Alice Pennell

APAC - Asia, Pacific and Africa Collection, British Library, London

Begum - Pennell's *Begum's Son*

BL - British Library, London

BM - *Blackwood's Magazine*

BtA - Bentley archive, British Library, London

BwA - Blackwood archive, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh

Campaigns - Henty's *Through Three Campaigns*

Children - Pennell's *Children of the Border*

CMG - *Civil and Military Gazette*

CR - *Calcutta Review*

CS - Cornelia Sorabji

CSI - *Classified Subject Index to Calcutta Review 1844-1920*

'Daughter' - Henty's 'Soldier's Daughter'

Doorways - Pennell's *Doorways of the East*

EE - Edward Eyre

Engagements - Kaye's *Long Engagements*

GP - Ganpat papers, British Library, London

Herat - Henty's *To Herat and Cabul*

History - Kaye's *History of the War in Afghanistan*

HSB - Henty Society Bulletin

ILN - Illustrated London News

Insurrection - Eyre's Kabul Insurrection

JM - John Murray (publisher)

JMA - John Murray archive, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh

Journal - Sale's Journal of the Disasters in Affghanistan

'King' - Kipling's 'Man Who Would Be King'

Kingdom - Elphinstone's Account of the Kingdom of Caubul

KJ - Kipling Journal

Name - Henty's For Name and Fame

NLS - National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh

Operations - Eyre's Military Operations at Cabul

Roads - Ganpat's Roads of Peace

TLS - Times Literary Supplement

Introduction

I have been walking, as it were, with a torch in my hand over a floor strewn thickly with gunpowder. There is the chance of an explosion at every step. I have been treading all along on dangerous ground.¹

This thesis is a study of British literary responses to three specific historical events that took place during a century of involvement on India's Afghan Frontier. Against the immediacy of press reports on military and political engagements, I trace the influence of these conflicts on authors and readers of a variety of popular genres narrating Afghanistan. Some of these narratives were publishing sensations, some barely covered their costs; the work of some authors are read with enthusiasm today while others are almost unknown. I uncover material central to contextualising the work of these authors and the response of their readers, demonstrating the rise and fall in popularity of narratives on Afghanistan. Reading this trajectory of literary interest alongside the media attention greatly enhances our understanding of the impact of the three Anglo-Afghan Wars on the British imagination: an impact of relevance to any future study of literary responses to the Anglo-Afghan War in the twenty-first century. Reading the texts, the lives and the critical reception to the authors I have chosen for this thesis, I have, like their contemporary readers, followed their footsteps across the 'dangerous ground' of literary representations of Afghanistan.

¹ John William Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan: From the Unpublished Letters and Journals of Political and Military Officers employed in Afghanistan throughout the Entire Period of British Connexion with that Country*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1851), 1, p.vi.

The First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842) was the result of British attempts to control Afghanistan's responses to Russian overtures of friendship and Persian threats. Political and military misjudgements triggered an overwhelming British defeat and the need for a further campaign to rescue hostages and exact retribution on the Afghans. Competition between British or Russian influence over the Afghan court was also a central factor in the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880). After establishing British ascendancy through military force, the killing of the British Resident in Kabul a few months later led to a swift return of the army to avenge his death before withdrawing. Numerous military campaigns were waged against various tribal disturbances in the border regions in the intervening years, before the Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919), which took place at the same time as widespread unrest in India against the British presence. This brief war, prompted by the assassination of King Habibullah (1872-1919) ended with the Treaty of Rawalpindi, signed on 8 August 1919, giving Afghanistan a measure of autonomy in foreign affairs.

This thesis examines six authors for whom the Afghan Frontier is central to their literary careers. Chapter 1 investigates the media storm surrounding Florentia Sale (née Wynch) (1787 or 1790-1853), wife of General Robert Sale, who wrote of her first-hand experiences of the war in *A Journal of the Disasters in Affghanistan, 1841-2* (London: Murray, 1843). In Chapter 2 I explore the work of John William Kaye (1814-1876), editor, novelist, historian and man of letters, who commented on the immediate aftermath of the war in articles for the *Calcutta Review* in the 1840s, rewrote it as fiction in *Long Engagements: A Tale of the Affghan Rebellion* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1846) and later as authoritative fact in his *History of the War in Afghanistan* (London: Bentley, 1851). George Alfred Henty (1832-1902) was the author of over 120 historical-based boy's adventure books; in Chapter 3 I examine *For Name and Fame: or, Through Afghan Passes* (London: Blackie, 1885) and *To Herat and Cabul: a Story*

of the First Afghan War (London: Blackie, 1901) deal respectively with the second and first wars, while *Through Three Campaigns: a Story of Chitral, Tirah and Ashantee* (London: Blackie, 1903) and 'A Soldier's Daughter', serialised in *The Girl's Realm* in 1903, then published in book form as *A Soldier's Daughter and other stories* (London: Blackie 1905) dealt with other Afghan frontier expeditions of the 1890s. Joseph Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), the subject of Chapter 4, was a journalist, poet and author, who wrote imaginatively on Afghanistan and its effects on the British psyche in 'The Man Who Would Be King' (first published in *The Phantom 'Rickshaw and other Eerie Tales*, volume five of the six Indian Railway Library series Allahabad: Wheeler, 1888) and *Kim* (London: Macmillan, 1901). Martin Louis Alan Gompertz (1886-1951), an officer in the Indian Army, wrote under the pseudonym Ganpat. His writings on Afghanistan cover reportage in 'Mahsudland 1919-1920' in *Blackwood's Magazine* (October to December 1920) to historical fantasy in *Dainra* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929), romantic adventure in *Marches of Honour* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931) and *The Snow Falcon* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935). His factually-based novel *Roads of Peace* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931) is the focus of Chapter 5. Alice Maude Pennell (née Sorabji) (1874-1951) was a medical missionary and wrote *Pennell of the Afghan Frontier* (London: Seeley Service, 1914) and *The Children of the Border* (London: Murray, 1926). In chapter 6 I trace her failure to translate her deep knowledge of the frontier territory into literary success. All these authors engaged with Afghanistan in degrees ranging from a central locus of identity to an opportunistic grasp of a popular trend, writing out of first-hand experience or culled from the standard works of the time.

Recent scholarship has begun to study how the British read Afghanistan through the literature of the period. Corinne Fowler's *Chasing Tales* (2007) considers travel writing and journalism before concentrating on Kipling's 'The Man Who Would Be

King'.² Apart from the early nineteenth and twenty-first centuries, Fowler's 'site-specific' work avoids 'close scrutiny of historical specificities unique to particular decades', an aspect of my research that directly enhances this thesis' analysis. Fowler's focus on more modern texts leaves a lacuna between *Kim* (1901) and Eric Newby's *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* (1958), with only Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana* (1937) tackling the period covered by the final section of my thesis. Antoinette Burton's 'On the First Anglo-Afghan war, 1839-42: Spectacle of Disaster' is a call to 'right-size' the role of Afghan and Sikh participants, against the monolithic interpretations of British and Russian interests.³ While historical reinterpretation is beyond the scope of my literature-based work, she refers to Henty's *To Herat and Cabul* as 'one of the most concise, and jingoistic, accounts' of the conflict and calls for a study that 'tries to recapture the seeds of the narrative that are everywhere to be found in the Victorian representations of it', a project to which this thesis hopes to contribute.⁴ The same web journal contains an article by Zarena Aslami that builds on her recent book *The Dream Life of Citizens* (2012), which analyses Henty's *For Name and Fame* in considerable depth, with a selection of texts taken from the narrow time frame of 1879-87, to uncover British anxieties about their own increasingly interventionist state.⁵

² Corinne Fowler, *Chasing Tales: Travel Writing, Journalism and the History of British Ideas about Afghanistan* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007). She also covers Sale and Kaye.

³ Antoinette Burton, 'On the First Anglo-Afghan War, 1839-42: Spectacle of Disaster.' *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, ed. by Dino Franco Felluga. Extension of *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net* <http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=antoinette-burton-on-the-first-anglo-afghan-war-1839-42-spectacle-of-disaster> [accessed 14 January 2013].

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Zarena Aslami, 'The Second Anglo-Afghan War, or The Return of the Uninvited.' *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, ed. by Dino Franco Felluga. Extension of *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net* <http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=zarena-aslami-the-second-anglo-afghan-war-or-the-return-of-the-uninvited> [accessed 14 January 2013]; *The Dream Life of Citizens: Late Victorian Novels and the Fantasy of the State* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), particularly chapter 2, "'Rather a Geographical Expression Than a Country': State Fantasy and the Production of Victorian Afghanistan", pp.45-84.

The purpose of this thesis is to deploy the empirical and quantitative methodology of book history to shed light on the public responses elicited by these three successive Afghan wars. My focus is on the print culture within which the narratives of British involvement in Afghanistan were produced and circulated. Despite an author's imprisonment, a manuscript's loss, a publisher's rejection, a print-works destruction or a bookseller's remaindered stock, I hold fast to a subject that is 'rooted in the material world, [...] characterized [and] understood in part, by countable quantities: reams of paper, tons of type, print runs, and percentage returns on capital.'⁶ The raw material for this approach has been found primarily in the archives of the respective publishing houses. Where these are accessible, both the ledgers and any correspondence have been used to glean the fullest understanding of the place of the author and their text within the book trade. Where extensive work has already been done, such as with Henty, or access to the archives is restricted by design or circumstance, such as with Kipling, I have relied upon existing secondary sources. This study does not claim the statistical heft of Simon Eliot's extensive examination of the publishing trade in the long nineteenth century, *Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing, 1800-1919* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1994), yet my targeted use of quantitative book history analysis, for selected authors and titles, allows me to distinguish the 'accelerations and declines' in popularity for these literary representations of Afghanistan over the period covered by my thesis.⁷

The titles that form the subjects of my thesis are neither static artefacts nor theoretical paradigms. It is the movement of the physical texts - from author's manuscript to publisher's reader; from printer to shipping agent; from shop to reader; and from reviewer back to author - that demonstrates the influence of these narratives

⁶ Simon Eliot, 'Very Necessary but Not Quite Sufficient: A Personal View of Quantitative Analysis in Book History', *Book History*, 5 (2002), 283-293 (p.283).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.286.

on the British/Afghan discourse. In this approach I use Robert Darnton's model of the communication circuit, which helps explain the intermingled cause and effect of author and reader responses and the demands of the book trade. As Darnton's circuit runs through its complete cycle, 'it transmits messages, transforming them en route, as they pass from thought to writing to printed characters and back to thought again'.⁸ To this model, I have added an emphasis on the historical events with which my authors engage, and on how these historical events were reported in the press, influencing the expectations of readers as to how these would be narrated.

Many of these readerly expectations had been established during the quarter of a century before the First Anglo-Afghan War, in the popular works of Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832). His bestselling series of Waverley novels melded historical fact with the romantic fiction of character and plot, to establish the genre of the historical romance. This introduction of fictional characters into historical events was a style taken up (with less critical acclaim) by one of my authors in his stories for boys, but the range of genres I study, from the authoritative historical account to imaginative fantasy, relies upon the skills of the storyteller. It is these skills that, to borrow from the historian Hayden White, promulgate 'the fantasy that *real* events are properly represented when they can be shown to display the formal coherency of a story'.⁹ The essence of storytelling, according to White, lies in a form of narrative with 'well-marked beginning, middle, and end phases', a description that echoes the explanation of the writer John Kaye, whose reworking of his history of the First Anglo-Afghan War from a two- to a three-volume edition, gave it 'the epic completeness of a beginning, a middle, and an

⁸ Robert Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?' in David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, eds., *The Book History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), 9-26 (p.11).

⁹ Hayden White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', *Critical Enquiry*, 7.1, (Autumn 1980), 5-27 (p.8).

end.¹⁰ Such storytelling is a theme throughout this thesis. As discussed in chapter five, Ganpat based one of his novels on his frontier service during and after the Third Anglo-Afghan War, of which a critic wrote that it rang true as 'history brightly and sincerely written as a background to a very appealing story'.¹¹

My thesis traces the rise and fall of readers' interests in Afghanistan, a trajectory that follows closely the political, military and media engagement with Afghanistan over the century. As evidence for this critical examination, I examine a selection of texts, covering genres ranging from personal memoir to official history and reportage to adventure romance. In addition to my close reading of the texts, I interrogate archival material from publishers' archives (for information on the book history of the texts) and from newspaper archives (for information on the critical reception of texts and current events influencing authors and readers). In order to organise this wealth of archival data, close reading and interpretation that emerges, I refer to each of my selected authors to address my key research questions. I consider the extent to which India's Afghan Frontier featured as a literary trope in the cultural life of Britain and Anglo-India from 1839-1939. Authors write surrounded by the realities of historical and political events; I investigate the extent of press influence on writers (both as commentators and those commented upon) and readers of narratives of the Afghan Frontier. My analysis further considers whether distinctions between genres, such as personal memoir and official history, or the character-based realist novel and the adventure-based quest romance, are useful in contextualising the writings under consideration. My research into the archives of publishers and newspapers enables me to investigate what publishers' records, reviews and advertisements can tell us about the public appetite for narratives of the Afghan Frontier. Finally, I consider how

¹⁰ White, p.6; John Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan*, 2nd ed, 3 vols (London: Bentley, 1857), I, p.vi-vii, discussed in chapter 2.

¹¹ *Cork Examiner*, 8 March 1933, reviewing Ganpat's *Roads of Peace* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931).

paratextual and non-literary ways of narrating supplemented the literary imaginations of British and Anglo-Indian audiences.

For each of the three conflicts I have selected two authors to demonstrate the levels of popular interest in their work and subject matter. The First Anglo-Afghan War is an early example of a media war, where reports of the disastrous retreat, the plight of the hostages and the appearance of their smuggled letters in the newspapers created an intense publicity storm. The heightened appetite amongst readers for accounts of the conflict resulted in an undignified scramble amongst the participants, particularly the captives, to be the first in print. In chapter 1 I investigate Sale's *Journal* against these competing narratives. Kaye, as editor of the *Calcutta Review* during the 1840s, was well placed to review the works and critique the ensuing debate. In chapter 2 I trace his reworking of the themes of the war, firstly in his novel *Long Engagements* and then his authoritative *History of the War in Afghanistan*, based upon a skilful blending of numerous official reports and private papers to which he was given access. The first section of the thesis follows the narrative of the First Anglo-Afghan War through changing genres, from the single, distinctive voice of Sale recorded in the traditionally feminine form of a diary during her captivity, through the filter of media interest and press reports, to the multi-sourced and heavily researched work of an historian employed in the London base of the effective government of much of the Indian empire: the East India Company. This section proves the explosive start of public interest in Afghanistan and the sudden market for narratives to describe, dramatize and denounce the disasters of the First Anglo-Afghan War.

The Second Anglo-Afghan War was a conflict associated with fast, effective military advances and swift retaliation, in contrast to the shambolic retreat and months of delay during 1842. This dynamism helped to foment the cult of hero worship that

grew up around soldiers such as Major-General Frederick Roberts (1832-1914).¹² His distinguished military career featured in more than one of Henty's historically based adventures for boys, but in chapter 3 I deal with his substantial presence in *For Name and Fame*. Henty later wrote about the 1839-42 war in *To Herat and Cabul* and on two of the Afghan frontier expeditions of the 1890s in *Through Three Campaigns*; in 'A Soldier's Daughter', one of the rare stories he wrote for girls, a heroine's escape from her Afghan captors tests gender roles in Henty's adventure fiction. In chapter 4 I analyse the imaginatively richer and critically more admired work of Kipling, who, like Henty, started his career as a journalist. He treats the Second Anglo-Afghan War more elliptically in 'The Man Who Would Be King', where his disreputable anti-heroes plan their route to riches by following Robert's marches to 'Jagdallak' before turning off the well-trodden path of military glory towards a more personal and precarious series of conquests.¹³ In *Kim*, the eponymous boy hero roams the northern states of India with the particular freedom of one protected by secret and secretive societies, until an expedition across the border threatens him both physically and psychologically. Although the area he traverses is nearer to his training ground of Simla than Afghanistan, the confrontation with the two disguised spies, one Russian, one French, place the concerns of the narrative firmly in the territory of the Great Game. For Henty, British involvement in the Afghan Frontier was a case of proving racial and imperial superiority; for Kipling, the territory tested, threatened and ultimately consumed the hubristic myth of Britain's imperial powers. In this section the trajectory of readers' interest in Afghanistan reaches its peak, fed and sustained by the work of two very different writers: the opportunistic hero-worship of Henty's historical themes and Kipling's rich tableau of loafers, spies and travellers.

¹² Roberts rose in rank to Commander-in Chief in India and Field Marshal, and in honours to be Baron, Earl and Viscount. Given the command of the Kurram Field Force in 1878, he fought at the outset of the Second Anglo-Afghan War as a Major-General.

¹³ Rudyard Kipling, 'The Man Who Would Be King', in *The Man Who Would Be King: Selected Stories of Rudyard Kipling*, ed. by Jan Montefiore (London: Penguin, 2011), 98-126 (p.105).

Unlike Kaye, Henty or Kipling, Ganpat was an active participant, describing his first-hand experiences of the Third Anglo-Afghan War in a series of articles titled 'Mahsudland 1919-1920' for *Blackwood's Magazine*. A number of his fantasy romances were set in the Afghan Frontier, but it is his factually-based *Roads of Peace*, lauded as 'set out in the form of fiction, but every word of it is true' by the author Ian Hay, that I will study in depth.¹⁴ Pennell, Indian by birth, medical missionary by choice, imperialist by conviction, provides another facet to the writings of those who lived and worked on the Frontier. Like Ganpat, she was eager to promote her status as an insider with personal knowledge of the places about which she wrote. Her first novel, *Children of the Border*, had very few western characters yet a stubbornly pro-British message. Within the narrative it was the experiences of fighting in the First World War that affected the heroine's husband, a momentous event that, amongst the real-life reading publics, overshadowed British enthusiasm for adventure stories in this distant part of the empire. When Pennell tried to return to the subject of Afghanistan with her fourth novel, Murray's reader dismissed it as unlikely to attract the attention of the British reading public and it was never published. In the aftermath of the First World War, readers in Britain and India followed the lead of the press in turning their attention away from the Afghan Frontier. By examining these two middlebrow and (in the case of Ganpat) moderately successful authors, I demonstrate how literary representations of Afghanistan had by the 1920s and 30s fallen out of fashion. Without the drama of a hero, historian or bestseller to attract readers' interests, book sales and literary careers dwindled.

The division of this thesis into three parts correlates to the three wars and their literary responses. My in-depth studies of six authors, selected for the diversity of their

¹⁴ *Mid-Sussex Times*, 21 February 1933, British Library, Ganpat Papers, mss eur B346/3. [Hereafter BL and GP3].

literary responses, demonstrate unexpected synergies and divergences. Indeed the connections between authors writing on different conflicts, ranging over the entire century of my study, support my conclusions regarding the rise and fall in popularity of these various narratives of the Afghan Frontier. I trace this trajectory from the intense but brief interest in the Sale phenomenon during the first Anglo-Afghan War, through the steep rise in popularity of the second Anglo-Afghan War connected with the hero-worship of strong military commanders, followed by a waning of enthusiasm for imperial adventures in Afghanistan from the turn of the century, to the extent that the third Anglo-Afghan War barely registered on the public consciousness.

Representations in the media of military engagements influenced popular support for British imperialism. As a central pillar to the investigations that follow I have used the *Illustrated London News* [hereafter *ILN*], a popular weekly paper whose first edition went on sale on 8 May 1842, after Britain had received news of the loss of the army leaving Kabul, but before the rescue of Sale and the other hostages. The weekly sales figures for *ILN* started at 26,000 and rose to 66,000 by the close of 1842. By 1851 it was 130,000. The special issue for the marriage of the Prince of Wales in 1863 sold 310,000 copies. The numerous illustrations (32 in the 16 page edition of 14 May 1842, 56 engravings of Queen Victoria's first visit to Scotland later in the same year) made it not only popular at the time, but for today's researchers, 'it is the complex relationship of text to image that makes *ILN* such a fascinating object of study'.¹⁵ The historian Arthur Bryant, in the 1942 centenary issue, described the 118 folio volumes of the journal as 'probably the most important and comprehensive single historical document ever compiled' about the century.¹⁶ As one of the many imperial conflicts to

¹⁵ See Patrick Leary, 'A Brief History of The *Illustrated London News*' (2011) <http://find.galegroup.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/iln/researchTools.do?searchTerm=sas_01&inPS=true&prodId=ILN&userGroupName=tou&dblist=#> [accessed 27 February 2012].

¹⁶ Edward B. Orme, 'A History of The *Illustrated London News*' (1986) <http://www.iln.org.uk/iln_years/historyofiln.htm> [accessed 27 February 2012].

be covered by the press, the frequency of reports both reflected *ILN*'s readers' interest in Afghanistan, and created and confirmed public understanding of the situation there, thus feeding directly into the literary responses I consider, enabling me to compare these figures with information from the publishers and critics, as well as close readings of the work of my six authors.¹⁷

To support my use of the *ILN*, I have compiled similar data from two other newspapers. *The Times*, established in 1785 (initially under the title of the *Daily Universal Register*), was, during the period of my study, a daily paper whose wide influence as an opinion former in political and business circles is belied by its comparatively small circulation figures. It was the first paper to employ war correspondents, and successive governments found *The Times*' network of foreign informants to be often more reliable and comprehensive than their own official contacts. In the 1860's, when the *ILN* was selling 300,000 copies a week, *The Times* was the largest selling daily newspaper with a daily circulation of 70,000 copies. These figures were dwarfed by the introduction in 1896 of the *Daily Mail*, promoted as *The Busy Man's Daily Journal* and marketed at the burgeoning lower middle-classes. Selling at a halfpenny, half the price of its rivals, it sold nearly 400,000 of its first edition and by 1899 its daily circulation was 500,000. From the 1920s it was selling one and a half million copies a day, approximately ten times the sales of *The Times*, a position that continued into the 1960s when the *Daily Mail*'s two and a half million and *The Times*' 250,000 compare to the dwindling sales of 50,000 for the *ILN*. As *The Times* led the way with war correspondents, so the *Daily Mail* employed the first female war correspondent, when Lady Sarah Wilson reported on the Second Anglo-Boer War and the siege of Mafeking, lifting the circulation to over a million in 1902. As with the *ILN*,

¹⁷ Using the search facility on the *ILN* website, I have extracted the 'hits' for the term 'a*fghanistan' from 1839-1939, to demonstrate media enthusiasm for Afghanistan. (See Appendix).

I have subjected the archives of these two daily papers, the patrician *Times* and the populist *Daily Mail*, to a search of the term 'a*fghanistan' and recorded the 'hits' in graphs to be found in the Appendix. The graph of *The Times* shows a remarkably similar pattern to that of the *ILN*, while that of the *Daily Mail*, despite covering less than half the period under discussion, confirms the fluctuating levels of media interest in Afghanistan during the first four decades of the twentieth century.

This thesis, concerned with the literary response to military events on the Afghan Frontier over a century, will of necessity focus on the anxieties and disruptions of the many conflicts and their costs in terms of blood, money and national honour. It is therefore a useful corrective at the outset, to remember some of the attractions that the area offered to the British imagination when not engaged with muskets, jezails and cannonade. Thirty years before Sale recorded her life in captivity, fixing Afghanistan in the British imagination, the country had been introduced to readers in an influential and wide-ranging study, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* [hereafter *Kingdom*], compiled by Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859), the Envoy heading the British mission to Kabul in 1808.¹⁸ Although political instability prevented him travelling further into Afghanistan than the border town of Peshawar, Elphinstone spent his time there gathering as much information about the country as he could extract from visitors and informants. He returned from his mission 'laden with literary spoils' in the shape of his official reports submitted to the Government, from where, he believed, they would be 'cast aside to encumber the shelves or be buried in the vaults of Leadenhall Street'.¹⁹ His friend and mentor, Sir James Mackintosh (1765-1832), then Recorder of Bombay, persuaded him to revise and publish these reports in book form. After ensuring he

¹⁸ Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul: And its dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India; comprising a view of the Afghaun nation, and a history of the Dooraunee monarchy* (London: Longman and Murray, 1815).

¹⁹ Thomas Edward Colebrooke *Life of the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone*, 2 vols (1861; London: John Murray, 1884), 1.241.

would not be encroaching on the themes of John Malcolm's (1769-1833) *The History of Persia* (1815) 'or I shall spoil your work and waste my trouble [...] while I might be hunting, hawking, reading &c., &c., with much more profit to myself and the public', he prepared his work for publication.²⁰ In 1815, the finished manuscript was sent to England, where, according to Kaye, its publishers:

brought it out in becoming style, as books were brought out in those days - a magnificent quarto, with an elaborate map and coloured engravings, published at a price which would now be sufficient to scare away most purchasers. It was an undoubted success. It made Mr Elphinstone's literary reputation; and it is still, after a lapse of fifty years, consulted with undiminished interest and advantage by all who seek information relating to the countries which it so faithfully describes.²¹

Kingdom held sway over many subsequent accounts of the place and the people. It drew regular attention to the similarities between Afghanistan and Scotland, whether by the comparison of the surface area of various territories, or of the system of government, as Elphinstone likened the relationships between Afghan Kings and Khans to that of Scottish Kings to Lairds and Barons in ancient times. Elphinstone even described unleavened bread as 'toasted on an iron plate like what is used for oat cakes in Scotland'.²²

Its publication coincided with a booming interest in Scotland's recent history (from the Jacobite rising of 1745, the Stuart claims to the English crown, the

²⁰ Kaye, 'Our Indian Heroes, II The Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone' *Good Words*, 6 (January 1865), 165-76 (p.168). This article was later expanded into a chapter in the second volume of Kaye's *Lives of Indian Officers: Illustrative of the History of the Civil and Military Services of India* (London: Strahan, 1867).

²¹ *Ibid*, p.169. The book was advertised at 'price £3 13s. 6d. in 1 vol. 440. illustrated by Two Maps and 16 Plates, 14 of which are coloured.' *Leeds Mercury*, 18 November 1815. Using the purchasing power calculator at < <http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/> > [accessed 12 September 2013], this equates to £223.40 in 2011, the most recent comparison available.

²² *Kingdom*, p.416n.

pacification of the clans, and highland clearances) sparked by the *Waverley* novels, by the poet and novelist Walter Scott. This series, published anonymously from 1814 until Scott's authorship was revealed in 1827, attracted a wide and enthusiastic readership, and established a literary genre of historical romance fiction, where the framework of history was brought to life through vivid characterisation and dashing adventure. Both Scotland and Afghanistan were places of romance and rugged beauty, home to a wild and independent people. In drawing contrasts with what the British regarded as the sultry, servile India to the south, Elphinstone described 'the wild and novel scenery' of Afghanistan, with its healthy 'cold climate' in terms familiar to readers of Scott's Celtic romances. Here the inhabitants were 'not fluttering in white muslins, while half their bodies are naked, but soberly and decently attired in dark coloured clothing; and wrapt up [...] in large sheep-skin cloaks'.²³ The 'stormy independence' of the Afghans, with 'their strong and active forms, their fair complexions and European features [and their] sobriety, and contempt of pleasure' may have made for an uneasy life, but it was for Elphinstone preferable to the 'indolence and timidity' of Indians.²⁴

Mackintosh himself wrote the review of *Kingdom* in the *Edinburgh Review* (October 1815). Elphinstone's book got the lion's share of the 44-page article, with Claudius Rich's *Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon* being dispatched in the last five pages. Mackintosh emphasised what (for the British) was the most attractive feature of the Afghan character: their 'unreformed independence', which was 'superior to those more civilized neighbours [the Persians] who have exchanged independence for despotism'.²⁵ Jane Rendall notes how this contrast between Afghanistan and Persia [now Iran] demonstrates an 'ambivalence [...] towards the advance of civilization' shared by both

²³ *Kingdom*, p.150.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p.150.

²⁵ *Edinburgh Review*, 25:50 (October 1815), 398-442 (p.432).

author and reviewer.²⁶ Yet while he created connections between Britain and Afghanistan by praising a characteristic, that of independence, valued by both peoples, Mackintosh at the same time commented on the distancing effect of reading about a country so far away, pushing the Afghans back into an almost mythical past. It was Dryden, he recalled, who, using the analogy of India, observed:

in the preface to the tragedy Aurengzebe [...] that distant, and especially unknown places, produce on the imagination the same effect with ancient times; and that the story of Aurengzebe's family at Agra and Delhi was as remote from the minds of English spectators, as the fate of Caesar seventeen centuries before.²⁷

In November 1815 the publisher John Murray sent 'a copy of a valuable work by Mountstuart Elphinstone on the *Kingdom of Cabul*, which will, I think, interest you' to the well-known man of letters, Walter Scott.²⁸ Murray had intended that Scott review this for the *Quarterly Review*, but was forced to withdraw his request the following month, on discovering from his agent that 'Elphinstone's *Cabul* has been, since the day of publication, in the hands of Mr. Barrow, whose article upon it is in progress, and will appear in our next number'.²⁹ He attempted to smooth any ruffled feelings by referring to the interest of his proprietor in Scott's work in hand: 'Croker was so pleased with the idea of a Caledonian article from you, that he could not refrain from mentioning it to the Prince Regent, who is very fond of the subject, and he said he would be delighted, and

²⁶ Jane Rendall, 'Scottish Orientalism: From Robertson to James Mill', *The Historical Journal*, 25.1 (March 1982), 43-69 (p.66).

²⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, p.400.

²⁸ Murray to Scott, 8 November 1815, Samuel Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends: Memoir and Correspondence of the Late John Murray, with an Account of the Origin and Progress of the House, 1768-1843*, 2 vols (London: Murray, 1891), 1.286. My thanks to Dr. M.A. Katritzky for drawing this link to Scott and the 'Culloden Papers' to my attention. At the time of this letter, Scott's authorship of the *Waverley* series was not yet public knowledge.

²⁹ Murray to Scott, 25 December 1815, Smiles, 1.287.

is really anxious about it'.³⁰ This 'Caledonian' piece, the final pages of which were dispatched to Murray by 26 or 27 of January, was quickly typeset to appear in the January 1816 edition of the *Quarterly Review*. More an ethnographical study of the Highland clans and a history of the Rebellion of 1745, than a formal review of the recently published *Culloden Papers*, Scott's article ran for 50 pages, a point he felt some diffidence about, commenting in his defence 'that the Highlands is an immense field, and it would have been much more easy for me to have made a sketch twice as long than to make it shorter'.³¹

One of Scott's most celebrated articles, 'Culloden Papers' appeared later retitled 'Manners, Customs, and History of the Highlanders of Scotland'. Scott, who had a copy of Elphinstone's *Kingdom* with him during the final three months of his article's composition, wrote to Murray that 'Elphinstone's book is by far the most interesting of the kind I have ever read'.³² Acknowledging that his article drew explicitly on the connections raised by Elphinstone between the two fields of investigation, Scott had written:

indeed, when we took up the account of Cabul, lately published by the Honourable Mr Elphinstone, we were forcibly struck with the curious points of parallelism between the manners of the Afghan tribes and those of the ancient Highland clans.³³

Scott's referencing of Elphinstone's work at numerous places throughout 'Culloden Papers' helped him, as James Watt has written, to 'stress the universality of

³⁰ Murray to Scott, 25 December 1815, Smiles, I.287.

³¹ Scott to Murray, 25 January 1816, Smiles, I.289-90. Duncan Forbes's extensive collection of documents relating to Scottish history was published as *Culloden Papers, comprising an extensive and interesting correspondence from the year 1625 to 1748*, ed by H.R. Duff (London: Cadell, 1815).

³² *Ibid*, I.290.

³³ Scott, 'Culloden Papers', *Quarterly Review*, 14.28 (January 1816), 283-333 (p.288). Comments such as these, and the comparisons that inspired them, fed into the rich historical discourse on ethnicity and the suitability of certain 'martial races' to service within the military. Discussion on Ganpat's *Roads of Peace* in chapter 5 shows that this mindset remained a feature of the Indian Army in the 1930s.

human nature', a view of history that saw parallels between different societies and ages, indicating a fundamental unity of civilisations.³⁴ This was in opposition to those such as James Mill and Thomas Babington Macaulay, to whom the East could offer no lessons to the West, and to whom 'the Hindus of the present day only offered a perspective on the lives of *other* Hindus'.³⁵ In a correlation to the distancing effect mentioned by Mackintosh in his review of *Kingdom*, the link with Afghanistan allowed Scott to create a territory for his readers to 'occupy imaginatively', whilst 'neutralising' the troublesome Highlanders by portraying them 'as extrinsic and alien'.³⁶

So an important figure in British literary life, sharing with Elphinstone both a Scottish heritage and a generous opinion of universal civilisation, wrote what amounted to a glowing review of *Kingdom* in an extended and greatly admired essay in an influential periodical, which would surely have enhanced Elphinstone's reputation. Yet my reading of his letters to his friend Lady Hood (1783-1862), herself a great friend of Scott's, reveals a curious lack of concern. In his letter of 27 April 1816, he had not yet seen Mackintosh's review in the *Edinburgh Review* (of October 1815), having only received an acknowledgement of the manuscript's safe arrival in Britain.³⁷ After anticipating critical comments on the type of travellers' narratives that take 'greater time and labour to follow their peregrinations on paper than to explore in person the countries they describe', he went on to discuss Scott's recent works.³⁸ Scott had, following Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, been one of the first to travel to the Continent to see the battlefield, hurrying in Byron and Southey's footsteps to collect impressions

³⁴ James Watt, 'Scott, the Scottish Enlightenment, and Romantic Orientalism', in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, ed by Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010), 94-112 (pp.99).

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.95.

³⁶ David Richards, *Masks of Difference: Cultural Representations in Literature, Anthropology and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.127.

³⁷ Elphinstone had read Mackintosh's review by the time he wrote to another friend in May 1816, as related in Kaye's article in *Good Words*, p.170.

³⁸ Strangely, he appears to not yet have read the October edition of the *Edinburgh Review*, yet has already read Scott's *Pauls' Letters to his Kinsfolk*, only published on 25 January 1816. I have not yet found any evidence that this previously appeared in another form.

for his writing, along with some tangible and gruesome souvenirs.³⁹ Elphinstone was dismissive of the letters that had been adapted from Scott's actual correspondence, published as *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, writing 'I do not much admire Walter Scott's first letter, or indeed any part of his journey'.⁴⁰ He continued in critical tone on the waste of Scott's talents in chasing a theme which 'leave[s] no room for fiction', and on 'exhaust[ing] himself in those letters', instead of writing poetry.⁴¹ In Elphinstone's mind, Scott should have stayed at home awaiting the inspiration of the Muse, instead of his unnecessary journey, of which:

there is something so much beneath the dignity of so great a poet in posting over to Waterloo for materials for a saleable epic poem, like a fourth-rate landscape painter setting off to the lakes to sketch for the print shops.⁴²

Others, such as the satirist Eaton Stannard Barrett, had scoffed at the notion of Waterloo as an appropriate subject for art, where the costumes were 'sadly deficient in the picturesque'.⁴³ Poets did provide a filter through which to view and interpret Waterloo, with Murray using verses from Byron and Southey in his *A Hand-Book for Travellers on the Continent* (1836) and another author (uncredited) who recommended 'that his "young lady" readers "take Byron", and that the "more staid traveller" bring Scott'.⁴⁴ Scott's *The Field of Waterloo; A Poem*, was published in October 1815 and sold moderately well, but its fame was punctured by this squib from an anonymous critic:

³⁹ Stuart Semmel, 'Reading the Tangible Past: British Tourism, Collecting, and Memory after Waterloo', *Representations*, 69 (Winter 2000), 9-37. In 1826 Scott asked the artist Haydon if he remembered a particular Life Guardsman who had been his model, whose skull Scott was in possession of. p.12.

⁴⁰ Elphinstone to Hood, 27 April 1816, in Colebrooke, i.315.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Semmel, p.19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.27.

On Waterloo's ensanguined plain
Full many a gallant man was slain,
But none, by sabre or by shot,
Fell half so flat as Walter Scott.⁴⁵

In a letter written in November 1816 to Lady Hood, Elphinstone, in reference to Mr Barrow's tedious and bland review of *Kingdom* in the *Quarterly Review* (October 1815), wrote that 'even the Quarterly reviewers have stuck to generals in their censure'.⁴⁶ During the writing of this letter Elphinstone claimed to have received the next edition (January 1816), a curious delay in contrast to the speed with which he obtained Scott's *Paul's Letters*, given that he was living at Poona (now Pune) near to the main port of Bombay (now Mumbai). He refers with evident delight to a:

compliment that goes far beyond all the partiality of my friends. It is from the Quarterly reviewers, who begin their account of Humboldt [January 1816] with the identical expressions of dispraise which they had applied to me [October 1815]. I am not so conceited as to imagine that I ever deserved to be abused in the same terms with Humboldt, but still my vanity is tickled by the coincidence. It is not quite fair to call the language of the "Quarterly" abuse, for, although their review of Caubul is not friendly and not able, the general character of the work at the beginning is quite as favourable as it was entitled to claim.⁴⁷

Both reviews began with acerbic reference to the 'forward zeal' of 'interested or indiscreet/injudicious friends' who 'extol' the author's 'acquirements/pretensions' 'in a

⁴⁵ The Walter Scott Digital Archive <<http://www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/works/poetry/waterloo.html>> [accessed 8 April 2012]. Scott's poem and 'Guy Mannering; or the Astrologer, by the Author of *Waverley*' were the two advertisements immediately preceding Elphinstone's *Kingdom* in the *Leeds Mercury*, see above.

⁴⁶ Elphinstone to Hood, 18 November 1816, Colebrooke, i.337.

⁴⁷ Elphinstone to Hood, 18 November 1816, Colebrooke, i.338. The book referred to is Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland's *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent, during the years 1799-1804*, 2 vols, trans. by Helen Maria Williams (London: Longman, Murray and Colburn, 1814).

strain of extravagant/exaggerated panegyric'.⁴⁸ The complete absence of any acknowledgement of Scott's generous references to *Kingdom* in the 'Culloden Papers', the leading article in the *Quarterly Review* which had, within the timeframe of writing this letter, been delivered into Elphinstone's hands, seems a surprising omission. Whether Scott, considered by Elphinstone 'so great a poet' was really such an anathema to him, or only appears so due to the partial evidence we now have is unclear, although I note that relations were sufficiently cordial for Elphinstone to join Scott's The Friday Club (established in 1803) in 1830, two years before Scott's death.⁴⁹

Where the evidence of the effect of Scott on Elphinstone is thin, the influence of the East on Scott's imagination is stronger. His comparison between the tribes of Afghanistan and the clans of the Scottish Highlands has already been noted, but Scott later picked up on the growing interest in the Orient with a short tale he wrote for the *Chronicles of the Cannongate*, a collection published in October 1827. It was his first attempt at fiction since his financial difficulties and his unmasking as the author of *Waverley*. 'A Surgeon's Daughter' was the last of the three tales to be completed, its composition delayed by the occasional absences of his neighbour Colonel James Ferguson (1778-1859), upon whom he relied for 'the Eastern information required for the *Chronicles*'.⁵⁰ Scott felt the need for 'a little Hindoostanee - a small seasoning of curry-powder' with which to spice up his narrative, and rued that while the presence of Ferguson and 'half-a-dozen Qui Hi's besides, willing to write chits, eat tiffin, and vent

⁴⁸ *Quarterly Review*, 14.27 (October 1815), p.152 and 14.28 (January 1816), p.368.

⁴⁹ Elphinstone to Hood, 27 April 1816, Colebrooke, i.315.

⁵⁰ 1 September 1827. *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott from the original manuscript at Abbotsford* (New York: Harper, 1891), p.293.

all their Pagan jargon' could be an irritant, 'now that I want a touch of their slang, lo! there is not one near me'.⁵¹

The fashion for tales with an Oriental flavour goes back to the Crusades. From the eighteenth century, works such as the various versions of the *Arabian Tales* functioning as an exotic fillip for British and Anglo-Indian readers. As David Finkelstein and Priya Joshi have shown, the reforming influence of Macaulay and his English Education Acts of 1835, combined with the improvements in technology which shortened the sailing times between Britain and India, and to the marketing of the more portable 'Colonial' editions of the bulky triple-decker novels (both points raised by John Kaye during the 1840s) provided ideal conditions for an expansion of the English-language Indian novel for Anglo-Indian audiences.⁵² Scott was already aware of the competition as he completed 'A Surgeon's Daughter', writing in his journal that 'there are one or two East Indian novels which have lately appeared. Naboclish! Vogue la galère!'.⁵³ While the *Chronicles* as a whole was well received in Britain, 'The Surgeon's Daughter' was criticised as extravagant melodrama. In India, where Scott's poetry was in general more popular than his novels, Priya Joshi notes that enthusiasm for his works continued into the twentieth century. As I have shown, Afghanistan entered the British literary imagination as a country whose national and cultural distinction from India was emphasised by its connection to popular Scottish narratives.

In 1842, the year in which the first of my chosen authors, Florentia Sale, and her fellow captives suffered a lengthy and unwelcome stay in the mountains of Afghanistan,

⁵¹ 25, 22 August 1827. *Journal*, pp.290, 289. 'Qui Hi' roughly approximated the Bengali phrase 'who's there?', used to summon servants in India. The English in Bengal were called 'Qui Hi's' by Europeans living in other parts of India.

⁵² David Finkelstein, 'Book Circulation and Reader Responses in Colonial India', in *Books without Borders*, vol 2 *Perspectives from South Asia*, ed. by Robert Fraser and Mary Hammond (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), 100-111 (pp.102-3); Priya Joshi, 'Culture and Consumption: Fiction, the Reading Public and the British Novel in Colonial India', *Book History*, 1 (1998), 196-220 (pp.205-6).

⁵³ 16 September 1827, *Journal*, p.298. 'Let the galley be kept rowing; keep on, whatever may happen; come what may'.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert first visited Scotland. This was ten years before the purchase of Balmoral was finalised, but already the fashion for the wild mountains and picturesque glens of popular writers had made their mark on the public imagination, supported by numerous engravings in *ILN*. Scott, whose poetry and fiction dominated the first quarter of the nineteenth century, was known as the Wizard of the North. He created a strong cultural identity for Scotland, with his poetry and prose imbued with classical romance, medieval folk tales and historical narratives that 'sang of free, fierce, and warlike life [and] of lonely places haunted in the long grey twilights of the North'.⁵⁴ According to Andrew Lang, after the 'very tame and commonplace' verses of previous poets, Scott 'came with poems of which the music seemed to gallop, like thundering hoofs and ringing bridles of a rushing border troop', and his renowned *Waverley* novels, though less in fashion by the end of the nineteenth century, were long relished by readers of every social class. This highly romantic world appears to co-exist with the geographical and social realities of the external world. Stuart Kelly's analysis of *Scotland*, for instance, is a wide-ranging attempt to produce a 'Baedeker' to Scott's 'contradictory legacy [of] an imaginary country; the physical space we call Scotland overlaid with the psychic, iconic space he contrived'.⁵⁵

In the literary trope of a wild, romantic place known predominantly through the act of reading, those thundering hoofs and ringing bridles could easily be transferred to the steep and treacherous mountainsides of a relatively unknown Afghanistan. As discussed by Sara Suleri, the picturesque framing of empire, whether through watercolour sketches of quaint scenes or journal descriptions of travel and adventure, has the effect of converting 'a dynamic cultural confrontation into a still life'.⁵⁶ The lack of safety in the far, foreign border of the Indian empire might, through the pages of a

⁵⁴ Andrew Lang, *Essays in Little* (London: Henry, 1891), p.90.

⁵⁵ Stuart Kelly, *Scott-land: The Man who Invented a Nation* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2011), p.4. Kelly does not note the connection to Afghanistan.

⁵⁶ Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), p.76.

book, be displaced into the familiar domestic settings of Scott's narratives. But the effect could not completely erase the realities of the situation. Afghanistan, to those who had never seen it, and to some that had, may superficially have resembled Scotland, and be considered as a close relation to the familiar place of romance and legends, yet at this time it was geographically a mostly uncharted country, with a culture kept hidden from strangers. Difficult to access, due to the combination of harsh geography and fiercely independent inhabitants, it was its key position, bordered by India, Russia and Persia, which made Afghanistan of interest to the major players of what became known to the British as the Great Game and to Russians as the Tournament of Shadows. This struggle between Britain and Russia for strategic advantage in the countries of Central Asia, centred (for Britain) on the threat to their Indian empire.⁵⁷ The natural reticence and suspicion towards strangers that was an integral part of Afghan society, fitted easily with the subterfuge of the Great Game. Spies set out in the guises of doctors and pilgrims to report on the geographical, ethnographical and political realities, and their surviving reports fed into the construction of the mythical, literary representations of Afghanistan.

In contrast to Scotland's clear border line, set by the imperial edifice of Hadrian's Wall, Afghanistan's borders were as confusing to the British as its internal politics: there were few precise territorial boundaries at this time. Attempts to define these borders were made in the 1890s, when, after lengthy mapping expeditions and deliberations between Britain, Russia and Afghanistan, the Durand Line was proposed, but it was subsequently a matter for fierce dispute that continues into the present time. The Frontier which concerns this thesis, that between Afghanistan and north-western India (now Pakistan), was a subject of on-going military and political debate in India and

⁵⁷ Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (1990; London: Murray, 2006) excellently introduces this subject. Kipling's Kim is trained to play his part in the intelligence work demanded by this subtle conflict.

Britain as to whether British jurisdiction extended to the Durand Line, or whether a buffer zone of the tribal areas should be left without administrative interference. This lack of certainty was unsettling, both geographically and politically, yet the very anxiety this created increased the opportunities for imaginative reinterpretation. As the fluid spaces between the familiar and the unfamiliar can disorientate the most rational of minds, so, according to Walter Prescott Webb, the wider space between the borders of accurate knowledge and the distant unknown horizon, that hazy place of knowing without understanding, provides a realm where imagination can have free play.⁵⁸ This interpretation is particularly relevant to readings of Kipling's 'King', where the solid texts on the editor's bookshelves are rejected, to be substituted by 'string talk', myth and masonic rituals.⁵⁹

My six chosen authors provide a rich variety of narrative representations and interpretations of Afghanistan. I use biographical, bibliographical, archival and critical evidence to demonstrate how they influenced, and were influenced by, the portrayal of Afghanistan in relation to Britain and her Indian empire. John Kaye, whose words at the start of my introduction come from his preface to his *History*, never put life or limb at risk by venturing over the border and into Afghanistan. Indeed of my six, only one man (Ganpat) and two women (Sale and Pennell) actually set foot upon such 'dangerous ground', whilst one (Kipling) may or may not have been shot at near the entrance to the Khyber Pass and another (Henty) only looked across the plains towards the mountain ranges, those 'ramparts of Empire', from the safety of a royal procession.⁶⁰ For this thesis, the writers' physical presence in the country is of less importance than their imaginative occupations: in the case of most of these writers, it is an Afghanistan of the mind.

⁵⁸ Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1953), p.349.

⁵⁹ 'King', p.114.

⁶⁰ Charles Wheeler, *India in 1875-76: the Visit of the Prince of Wales* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1876), p.263.

All six staked some or all of their literary reputations on their retellings of Britain's Afghan wars during the hundred years of conflict in the region from 1839-1939. The eyewitness account by Sale of the disastrous retreat from Kabul and the subsequent captivity, initially appearing as letters in the newspapers and later published in book form, caught the public imagination, turning her into the heroine of the hour. Hers was not the only account to reach the reading public, and the publishing history of *The Military Operations at Cabul* (1843) by Lieutenant Vincent Eyre (1811-1881), examined in chapter 1, further illustrates the appetite for such accounts. The growing British interest in Afghanistan will be demonstrated through my analysis of the figures from *ILN*. Sale, dubbed 'the Grenadier in Petticoats', is a central figure in the mediation of historical events into published narrative, through the interventions of the Indian and British newspapers and periodicals. So my starting point for this investigation into the literary construction of Afghanistan is a non-fiction memoir, which was widely disseminated and discussed. Against the narrower readership for Elphinstone's learned and expensive tome, Sale reached a greater popular audience as the first widely published writer on Afghanistan in Britain, capturing and moulding the growing public interest. As both subject of, and contributor to, the media frenzy around the First Anglo-Afghan War, Sale provides a strong opening fusillade to this thesis, and her image and influence echo through the following chapters.

In contrast to the meteoric popularity of the 'heroine of the hour', the writing career of Kaye stretched from schoolboy contributions to his famous *History of the Sepoy War in India* (first published in 1864), the expanded edition of which he was working on at his death. A prolific writer, he connected the transient world of media reporting with the solid establishment of detailed historical accounts. His varied literary career trained him to use and reuse the material available to him, shaping it from editorial comment to popular fiction, and thence to authoritative history, in his attempt

to catch the wave of public interest in Afghanistan that swept India and Britain. His comments on the controversial debates in the Anglo-Indian press, as to the reliability, authority and timing of Sale's and Eyre's journals, highlight the different critical responses these books received in India and Britain.⁶¹ Where Sale's book gives a vivid and compellingly individualistic account of the war, Kaye's *History* masses the ranks of military and political voices to tell a controlled, coherent narrative through his masculine overview of events.

Henty was a bestselling writer of Boys' literature, contributing greatly, in terms of titles and sales, to the developing genre of juvenile writing, and exercising a powerful influence on young minds. His career as a journalist trained him in his direct writing style, and as a special correspondent reporting from scenes of military conflict, he was used to rapid composition and the use of eyewitness accounts. His aim was to write a series of books, combining exciting military events with their associated heroic figures, in a compelling historical account of the British empire. Into each book was inserted a young boy, usually cut adrift through various circumstances from his home, who proved his innate British superiority through his instinctive gamesmanship and pluck. Ever the opportunist in his choice of subject matter, his lack of first-hand knowledge of Afghanistan did not prevent him using both the First and Second Anglo-Afghan Wars as subjects for his customary formula, demonstrating the commercial potential for literature with an Afghan subject matter in the eyes of British readers. Whilst literary critics such as Edward Said have dismissed Henty (alongside 'dozens of lesser writers' of adventure-imperialism) as of no great literary merit, his phenomenal sales figures

⁶¹ The term 'Anglo-Indian' is throughout this thesis used primarily in its older sense of British residents in India. The more recent, twentieth-century meaning, referring to those of mixed race who were previously called 'Eurasian', will be clarified as necessary.

show that these stories were hugely influential on the minds of the future soldiers and administrators of imperialist Britain.⁶²

Of my six writers, Kipling has the most solid literary reputation. His thwarted desires to be a war correspondent lead him to deal with the iconic site of conflict in a number of imaginative ways. Geographically close to the border, he arrived at the offices of the *Civil and Military Gazette* in Lahore within months of the end of the Second Anglo-Afghan War. His journalistic work builds a frame for the fantastical adventures of two loafers who journey to Kafiristan, in one of his best known short stories, 'The Man Who Would Be King'. *Kim*, key scenes of which engage with the Afghan Frontier, describes exploits that have considerably more official endorsement and successful outcome than those in his earlier story. *Kim* exemplifies Kipling's interpretation of the Great Game, demonstrating once again the appeal of Afghanistan as a subject for British readers. In this hugely influential book, British perspectives of Afghanistan are mediated and represented by the country's shadowy presence in the consciousness of the characters, rather than through direct engagement in the text.

Unlike Kaye (who spent most of his short military career on sick leave) or Henty or Kipling, when Gompertz, under his pseudonym Ganpat, wrote of marching and fighting, he drew directly on his own experience. He is the only one of my authors for whom military life was the primary career and writing the secondary. From reportage in *Blackwood's Magazine* in the late 1910s, to writing novels and short stories in the 1920s and 30s, the battles on the Afghan Frontier were the harsh reality behind much of his descriptions of the area, in clear contrast to the jaunty holiday tone of his Tibetan or British settings. Whereas his wilder flights of fantasy writing appear like pale imitations of authors such as Rider Haggard, the critical reception of his more realistic

⁶² Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993; London: Vintage, 1994), p.188.

fiction showed a strong appreciation for his inside knowledge, gained during 34 years in the Indian Army. Ganpat demonstrates that, even after the Third Anglo-Afghan War, moderately successful authors still wanted to write about Afghanistan.

As an Indian female medical missionary on the Afghan Frontier, Pennell provides this thesis with a writer's viewpoint that is distinct from the military, male, white and British variations of earlier chapters. Unashamedly pro-British, her imperialist views compromised her reception amongst Indian readers, as she criticised the rise of nationalism and endeavoured to strengthen the ties of friendship between India and Britain. Her connection to the Frontier, where she worked for many years, speaking Pashto fluently, made it a natural setting for her first novel *Children of the Border*, but sales figures for this and her subsequent two titles were dismally low. Her proposed fourth novel returned to the theme of Frontier life, but the readers' reports confirm that British literary interest in Afghanistan had waned considerably. In contrast with the intense media interest in Sale and her journal, Pennell lacked a newsworthy event to focus public attention, the literary skills to take opportunistic advantage of the resulting drama, or any useful connections with the newspapers and periodicals of her time, all factors which my research indicates have been significant in the positive public reception of an author's work. Despite Pennell's first-hand experience of Afghanistan, the theme was no longer commercial, and her book failed to find a publisher.

This thesis is concerned with the reading publics in both Britain and India, and their appetites for, and responses to, written material on Afghanistan. As scholarship on the history of reading has shown, over the century, mass literacy transformed previously limited readerships. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the author Wilkie Collins estimated, from the widespread presence of 'this locust flight of small publications' (as he called the countless cheap leaflets and penny broadsides), 'a reading

public of three millions' which lay beyond 'the pale of literary civilisation'.⁶³ The 1880 introduction of compulsory school attendance, with its formal reading lessons, greatly improved literacy levels. These changes widened both participation, in the numbers of people who now read, and choice, in the variety of reading material available. As the scope of reading material varied from the expensive multi-volume history to the penny dreadful, and the texts themselves could be variously accessed via the private bookshelf, the subscription library or the shared newspaper, so the publishers of my chosen authors took care to market the various works to their best advantage. Blackie's retained high production values for Henty's books in order to appeal to the school prize committees. Kipling's early short stories were printed as the cheap and portable Wheeler's Indian Railway series, while his later collected works were published in a number of variously priced sets to reflect his wide, iconic appeal, including compact colonial editions. Hodder and Stoughton reissued many of Ganpat's adventures as economical 2/6 Yellow Jackets but his travelogue *Magic Ladakh* (1928) was published by Seeley Service as a higher status book selling at 21 shillings.⁶⁴ Marketing decisions alone do not determine a book's popularity, but the giving or withholding of access for readers provided by such choices, feeds into the overall status of a text. Reception theory, and particularly Hans Robert Jauss's 'horizon of expectations', where the literary expectations of authors, readers and critics are shaped by the historical events that surround them, offers a useful way of understanding the fluctuating demand for writing about the Afghan Frontier, and

⁶³ Wilkie Collins, 'The Unknown Public', *Household Words*, 27 August 1858, 217-222 (pp.217, 218). These readers, Collins contends, are unknown to the critics, libraries, publishers and 'the Distinguished English writers of our own time', although he notes with approval the 'remarkable exception' of Scott's *Kenilworth*, 'now being reprinted as a serial attraction in a penny journal.' pp.218, 222.

⁶⁴ 2/6, also written as 2s. 6d., is 2 shillings and 6 pence, an eighth of a pound (£); 21 shillings (a guinea) is £1 and 1 shilling.

the extent to which readers were acutely aware of, and influenced by, the changing military and political realities of the region.⁶⁵

One meaning of the 'lines' that this thesis investigates is the physical border of Afghanistan, and the difficulties, especially in times of conflict, of identifying the front line. This matter of on-going dispute has been further complicated by the patchwork of tribal territories, each with a complex network of loyalties and disputes, through which the British had to pass; the lack of reliable information and coherent diplomacy added to the uncertainties that colour the literary responses of my authors. The time scale of my study is predicated on conflicts, so it is explicit that the writings I consider deal almost exclusively with Britain's military involvement with Afghanistan. Imperialism is never a benign policy for the subject peoples, and although Britain appeared to reject direct rule in Afghanistan, this did not prevent British aims being pressed forward at the point of bayonet and gun. The historical accounts of these wars provide both a context for my study and the bedrock of the underlying assumptions that influenced readers and writers alike, but it is important to differentiate literary and imaginative lines of print from factual ones. Covering the high tide of the British empire and its 'long, withdrawing roar', during this time there were a succession of military engagements around the globe.⁶⁶ All of these affected political enthusiasm and, of central interest to this thesis, readers' interest regarding Afghanistan.

The search for the bestseller is perhaps the unspoken aim of most authors, although they may subsume this into an expressed desire for literary renown. The current academic concern with the bestseller has become entangled in the definitions and categorisations of the middlebrow. Queenie Leavis first raised this concept as a matter of serious critical study in 1932, and many of the works studied in this thesis

⁶⁵ Hans Robert Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 2005), p.22.

⁶⁶ Matthew Arnold, 'Dover Beach' in *New Poems* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1867), pp.95-6.

could be categorised as middlebrow.⁶⁷ Rather than such anachronistic tools, for this study, categories such as memoir and history, or the realist novel and the adventure-based romance, more effectively situate the texts under consideration. In 1887, Andrew Lang provided a useful description of the contemporary 'flutter in the dovecots of culture', from those who objected to the 'delight of romantic narrative' in adventure tales, as against the 'unrelentingly minute portraiture of [...] the Unpleasant Real' in the realist novel.⁶⁸ Lang considered there was room for both, in a dispute he characterised as not about two opposites but instead 'two sides of a shield', the silver of realism and the golden of romance, either one of which could be enjoyed without the exclusion of the other. His acknowledgement of the discrepancies between the public's professed preference for 'the old books, the good books, the classics', whilst in reality 'reading the books of the railway stall', anticipates Leavis.⁶⁹ None of the texts considered here are the studied portraits of modern manners, subject to 'the unrelentingly exclusion of exciting events and engaging narrative'.⁷⁰ On the contrary, the macabre spectre on the cover of Kipling's *The Phantom Rickshaw and Other Eerie Tales* from Wheeler's Indian Railway Series, was aimed as far from domestic politeness as possible. That issue contained 'The Man Who Would Be King', a quintessential adventure, an example of 'the golden shield of male romance', and considered by Elaine Showalter to be 'the primer of empire' and chief talisman against the feminine lure of the home.⁷¹

In her recent consideration of genre and romance, Anna Vaninskaya provides an overview of how Lang's terms have been used over time. By the late nineteenth century, realism accurately reflected the 'commonplaceness of life', whilst romance

⁶⁷ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932; London: Pimlico, 2000).

⁶⁸ Andrew Lang, 'Realism and Romance', *Contemporary Review*, 52 (July-December 1887), 683-693 (pp.690, 684, 688, 687).

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.684.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.688.

⁷¹ Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Virago, 1992) p.80. For further discussion on gender and reading, see also Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

fulfilled 'a desire to be taken out of it to a more beautiful and refreshing world'.⁷² An anonymous contributor to the *Saturday Review* in 1894 links the love of romance fiction to the national character of the English. No longer engaged in fighting dragons or rescuing damsels in distress, the English have substituted these mythical exploits for the 'great vicissitudes' of exploration undertaken by:

a colonizing race that seeks adventures and finds them in every quarter of the globe [...] It is not to be wondered at that the race that most loves adventures and perils, and feels more keenly than others the fascination of the unknown, should prefer works of art that render its peculiar passion.⁷³

Joshi advances the argument that for Indian readers - especially those in India, for whom the reality of their lives was so different from the 'well-made universe of Western realism' - this realist style of literature was 'both alienating and defamiliarizing': they preferred instead 'a more familiar, antirealist literary landscape for pleasure: that of melodrama, romance, and the gothic'.⁷⁴ She notes the affinity of romance with Indian epics, giving these readers a familiar form with which to escape into the antirealism of fictional 'worlds that they could inhabit'.⁷⁵ Whilst her comments are made regarding Indian readers, her ideas introduce an interesting dual reading to the romance fiction with which this thesis is concerned: that perhaps for Anglo-Indian readers, who physically lived in the east yet considered the west to be their cultural 'home', these escapist stories managed to simultaneously comfort with a sense of exotic familiarity whilst they distracted with fantastical arabesques. Scott's familiar romances could be reimagined within these adventures, set in the strange new worlds the readers found themselves. For those who had never visited the Indian subcontinent, much less

⁷² Anna Vaninskaya, 'The Late-Victorian Romance Revival: A Generic Excursus', *English Literature in Translation 1880-1920*, 51.1 (January 2008), 57-79 (p.63).

⁷³ 'Romance and Realism', *Saturday Review*, 8 December 1894, 615-6 (p.615).

⁷⁴ Joshi, (1998), p.213.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.213.

the Afghan Frontier, the literary tropes of romance writings and the drama of press reports represented the place and the people more vividly than any number of visual images alone.

This thesis, as a book history investigation into literary accounts about Afghanistan, considers the genre and format choices made by writers and publishers to be materially important. As much as the authors' actual words, it is these different forms in which their work appeared, whether as private letters and diaries or in newspapers, journals and books, which has a direct bearing on their published readership. The historical events of the Anglo-Afghan Wars were interpreted and transformed as the circuits of communications spread and mingled, in a model first discussed by Robert Darnton, demonstrating how the text travels from author to reader, then returns to the author in reactions and critical reviews, to be responded to by the author in further writings. This journey is particularly evident in the First Anglo-Afghan War, where distinctions between private and public, between news and opinion blurred, with private letters used as official sources of intelligence, appearing in both the Indian and British media, and so returning to the captives for comment in subsequent journal entries.⁷⁶ The essentially feminine form of captivity diaries became bestsellers, fiction contained thinly disguised real-life characters who promoted or challenged imperial policies, and personal memoirs and unpublished manuscripts were transformed into the masculine authority of official history. Authors and publishers (together and occasionally in conflict with one another) worked to create and sustain a popular appetite for stories that made sense of British imperial ambitions on the Frontier, describing adventure and romance in a dangerous and exotic setting.

⁷⁶ Robert Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?' in *The Book History Reader*, ed. by David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London: Routledge, 2003), 9-26 (p.11).

Chronologically, this study draws to a close with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, yet Afghanistan has over the past decade erupted spectacularly into the modern British consciousness. Since 2001, military involvement has been intense, and the questions over the objectives, both military and ideological, and the costs, both financial and human, are as contentious as those raised in Parliament and the press in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Concerns over the conduct of troops, from reports of fraternisation in 1839, hangings in 1880 and booby traps in 1919, find their modern echoes in the mobile phone images and YouTube footage of today's news broadcasts.

Since the start of the optimistically named 'Operation Enduring Freedom' in October 2001, this current and longest British military engagement in Afghanistan can be tracked by a steady increase in writings on Afghanistan, as shown by a brief survey of sales figures recorded by the world's largest internet retailer Amazon. Of the 7,163 hits using the search word 'Afghanistan' in the Books section at www.amazon.co.uk, investigated in April 2012, only 471 are classified by the filters of 'English' and 'Fiction'. These filters are not particularly exact, as foreign translations appear, as do the facsimile reprints of nineteenth century histories and memoirs, and the recent distribution of US Congress documents in book format. They rely on the publishers' definitions and, as the numerous trade journals and review pages of newspapers and magazine select from the fiction category for their annual bestseller lists, it is highly advantageous for both publishers and their authors to categorise their narratives within this broad definition of fiction, however much they might be rejected by a more stringent consideration of genre. Within these 471 hits, by searching under publication date, I note that between the start of the record in 1984 and 2000, a total of 17 titles are listed, with some years having nothing listed as having been published at all. From 2001 to 2008 there is a steady average of 15 titles a year. Thereafter the figures build

substantially, from 21 in 2009 to 51 in 2010, and then trebling to 154 in 2011.⁷⁷

Speculation on the reasons for this late surge fall outside the remit of this thesis, suffice it to say that not all the most popular titles are in the Andy McNab/SAS style of war stories, but cover as wide a range of genres in the modern period as are contained in my thesis. Khaled Hosseini's two novels set in recent times, *The Kite Runner* (2003) and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) have been reprinted numerous times in various formats (including a graphic novel and a 'Bookclub in a box' edition) and translated into many languages, and his latest, *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013) may well follow this trend.⁷⁸ They are joined towards the top end of the bestseller list by Greg Mortenson's (disputed) memoir *Three Cups of Tea* (2006), and Asne Seirstad and Ingrid Christophersen's (equally disputed) *The Bookseller of Kabul* (2003). New narratives provide the literary responses to this country and this conflict in this century, yet perceptive readers may recognise within the descriptions of current events the prescient images of earlier engagements.⁷⁹ Tamim Ansary's *The Widow's Husband* (2009) treats the First Anglo-Afghan War as a specific event that gradually encroaches upon the tiny and apparently timeless village of Char Bagh. With a wider remit and historical accuracy, William Dalrymple's *Return of a King* (2013) tackles the same conflict, combining previously untranslated source material from Afghan, Iranian and Russian archives.⁸⁰

An interesting development over the last few years has been the number of reprinted texts, conveniently out of copyright. The 'fiction' list from 2007 includes facsimile histories, and by 2009 there are five distinct narratives covering the First Anglo-Afghan War, with more histories and memoirs reprinted in 2010. A key point

⁷⁷ When researched, 2012-13 consisted mainly of pre-order titles and was therefore not a complete record, but still added 51 to the total.

⁷⁸ Film and stage versions of *The Kite Runner* appeared in 2007.

⁷⁹ As Fowler's work has traced the echoes of such narratives in the writings of the 1950s to the journalism of the 2000s.

⁸⁰ William Dalrymple, *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

for this thesis is to note the frequency with which Kipling's 'The Man Who Would Be King' is published in new issues, both popular and academic. In 2008 there were three book editions, including the Oxford World Classics edited by Louis Cornell and an anthology of *British Empire Adventure Stories: Three Stirring Tales of Heroism from the Age of Empire* which contained the Kipling tale, Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and Henty's *With Clive in India*. By 2011 there are another 3 editions of Kipling, including the new Penguin Classics edited by Janet Montefiore. It is noticeable that irrespective of the number or mix of stories selected, the collection is inevitably titled with a variant of 'The Man Who Would Be King', demonstrating the extent to which this particular story features as a seminal text.⁸¹ An example of this influence is found in ex-SAS Bob Shepherd's debut novel *The Infidel*, which updates Kipling's short story to the twenty-first century.⁸² The significantly named Rudy Lipkingard (combining the family nickname with a perfect anagram of Rudyard Kipling), correspondent in Kabul, is told the tale of two discredited mercenaries (here Scottish), one with red hair, the other with thick black brows, by Dusty Miller, the ragged, wretched survivor of their adventures in Nuristan. He narrates their journey on foot, their training of an army, and how John Patterson was accepted as leader until, after an American bombing raid on their village, 'his mutinous subjects' turn on him, throwing him to his death from a bridge.⁸³

Considering the 471 titles in terms of popularity, there is no denying the high level of sales for stories such as *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. But the earlier historical settings hold their own; in *Flashman* (1969), reissued in paper in 2005 and as an e-book in 2011, the opening instalment of the irrepressible bounder's

⁸¹ Many of these texts are now available both in paper format and as e-books, and the figures I use for this small survey exclude the 11 Kindle e-book editions of 'The Man Who Would Be King' that were produced in 2011 alone.

⁸² Bob Shepherd, with M.P. Sagar, *The Infidel* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011).

⁸³ Shepherd, pp.401-2.

mock memoirs covers his ignominious survival of the First Anglo-Afghan War.⁸⁴

Perhaps more in keeping with Bernard Cornwell's *Sharpe* series, John Wilcox's hero Simon Fonthill is involved in the Second Anglo-Afghan War in *The Road to Kandahar* (2005). Continuing with the vogue of elaborating on the origins of fictional characters, Patrick Mercer's *Doctor Watson's War* was released as an e-book in January 2012, relating Watson's experiences during the Second Anglo-Afghan War. Also high in the popularity stakes is Philip Hensher's novel *The Mulberry Empire*, first published in 2002 and frequently reprinted, most recently in March 2012.⁸⁵ Featuring many of the historical characters of the First Anglo-Afghan War, Hensher's exuberant narrative includes a vivid portrait of the first of my authors, and the woman who first propelled Afghanistan into the British popular consciousness, Lady Florentia Sale.

My focus is upon the literary responses to the events in Afghanistan, and how fictional narratives created an 'Afghanistan of the mind'. As a consideration of *ILN* demonstrates, allying a visual image with a strong verbal narrative compounds both the attraction and the power of that account on the mind-set of the observer. The presentation of these visual images developed over the century of this study. In the early 1840s sketches and watercolours were sent home to be exhibited, engraved for publication (often with the intention of being bound in with the bestselling memoirs) or used in the technologically futuristic medium of the diorama. This latter 'Novelty Extraordinary', a media fore-runner of cinema, was a series of 'dissolving views' displayed on a 20 foot diameter disc, of which:

the large scale on which these views are given contributes greatly to the illusory effect, and enables the spectator to realize some of the scenes of both the

⁸⁴ George MacDonald Fraser, *Flashman* (1969; London: Harper Collins, 2005).

⁸⁵ Philip Hensher, *The Mulberry Empire, or Two Virtuous Journeys of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan* (London: Flamingo/Harper Collins, 2003).

reverses and successes of the British arms in the East, far beyond what volumes of description would do.⁸⁶

During the Second Anglo-Afghan War, the use of photography refined the viewers' own imagined landscapes, but the rise of the moving pictures, with cinematographic advances in colour and sound during the 1920s and 30s, increased the audience for popular narratives of the rugged terrain of the Afghan Frontier. Many of these films were based on published novels and memoirs. While the proliferation of newspapers, magazines and cheaper paperbacks ensured that reading continued to be a popular pastime, visits to the cinema became a regular and affordable attraction, and an important way of visualising alien and exotic societies.

I have used a bibliographical study to contextualise the writings of each of my six authors. This accompanies the critical examinations of the key texts selected, with close readings enabling a careful study of the origins and influences of their work. Despite the invaluable work of collaborative research such as the Reading Experience Database, it has proved challenging to recover evidence of readers' responses to individual texts.⁸⁷ Wherever possible I have accessed publishers' archives to interrogate sales figures, which, alongside any correspondence with the author, provide a useful though partial overview of the public appetite for the work in question. Adverts and reviews, and the publications in which they appear, provide yet more insight into the placing of their work, but these have at times been difficult to locate and the extant examples may be misleading in the absence of a complete archive. The useful *ILN* database is a fascinating resource, whose comprehensive nature and accessibility have immeasurably supported the factual and historical elements of this study, if not its imaginative interpretations. I have corroborated this aspect of my thesis by researching

⁸⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 9 December 1843; *Scotsman*, 27 July 1842.

⁸⁷ Reading Experience Database, 1450-1945 [UK RED] <<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/>>.

the databases of *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* to provide comparative figures to support the *ILN* findings.

These six authors, their direct and indirect experiences of the Afghan Frontier and their literary responses to it, form one calibrated point of this study, with the responses of their reading publics providing a second, and the press reporting of the historical events the third point. So with a small, sideways nod to the triangulations and theodolites used by the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, I trace the rise and fall of the fluctuating book market, to uncover the trajectory of reader engagements with the popular narratives of Britain's involvement in Afghanistan, during, between and after the three Anglo-Afghan Wars.⁸⁸ My first study is of a woman non-combatant, whose writing prior to the outbreak of the First Anglo-Afghan War was confined to her private journal and letters to family and friends. Yet Sale's record of the conflict extended far beyond predictable domestic concerns, to become the centre of a media sensation, and the dominating narrative of Britain's dramatic and disastrous first military engagement with Afghanistan.

⁸⁸ This survey to map India was led by William Lambton and George Everest in the first half of the nineteenth century. For a fascinating account of this Great Indian Arc of the Meridian, see Part Three: The Great Trigonometrical Survey and Cartographic System [pp.197-289] in Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (London: University of Chicago, 1997) and John Keay, *The Great Arc: The dramatic Tale of how India was mapped and Everest was named* (London: Harper Collins, 2000).

The Shape of War: The First Anglo-Afghan War, 1839-42

***'If she escapes she will publish everything': Lady Sale's Journal.*¹**

Before the dramatic events of the First Anglo-Afghan War, Afghanistan and its peoples had been the subject of learned treatises and secret governmental reports, of interest primarily to readers from the academic, the administrative or the leisured classes. This chapter demonstrates the speed and extent to which this changed through the character and writings of an author who became an instant celebrity. Her letters from Afghanistan were syndicated and discussed in newspapers throughout India and Britain, stirring up an intense public interest in her subsequently published journal. The immediacy of the first-hand account and the individualistic voice in which it was delivered simultaneously fashioned a distant colonial conflict into both a question of national honour and a heart-stopping drama that unfolded throughout 1842. This surge of popular interest is the starting point of my thesis as I map the trajectory of literary responses to Afghanistan over the century.

The literary re-presentation of Afghanistan had begun in the works of Elphinstone and Scott, but there is nothing like a war, especially one drenched in blood and drama, to draw the attentions of the newspapers, periodicals and their reading publics. The First Anglo-Afghan War was set in motion when the British government, concerned at the prospect of Russian influence on the borders of their Indian empire, tasked the East India Company with restoring the pro-British Shah Shujah (1785-1842) to the throne of Afghanistan in place of Dost Mohammed (1793-1863). Supported by an army of 4,500 troops and 12,000 camp followers, this was effected by April 1839.

¹ A version of this chapter has been submitted as an article in *Book History*, in press.

The foreign intervention that put Shujah on the throne became essential to maintaining his rule: as the invaders showed no sign of leaving Kabul, Afghan resentments multiplied, turning into outright attacks on the poorly designed British cantonments, which had been hastily constructed in a hard-to-defend position.² Persuaded that withdrawal was safer than remaining, the chaotic retreat through the deep snow of the passes began on 6 January 1842. Within days nearly all of the British garrison were dead, and, for the scant hundred survivors, a captivity began that lasted until September. Further British military action finally took place, releasing the hostages and making revenge attacks against their opponents. The British then withdrew from Afghanistan, Dost Mohammed returned to the throne, and the East India Company counted the cost of a disastrous and futile campaign.

This conflict provided death and disaster, captivity and redemption that played out in a year-long storyline in which one of the central figures was a feisty soldier's wife nicknamed 'the Grenadier in Petticoats'. During the unfolding events of the siege at Kabul, the retreat towards Jalalabad and the nine-month captivity, the words that were read and repeated most intently by the public came not from a literary giant, decorated general or learned explorer, but from a female non-combatant.

News of War

It was not from the pens of special correspondents, a breed as yet in its infancy, that news from Afghanistan came to fill the columns of the papers in India and Britain. It arrived in the shape of official reports and private letters, targeted at governmental or domestic audiences: but with the crisis unfolding, the wider public looked for

² As Engineer, Lieutenant Sturt, Sale's son-in-law, was later posthumously blamed for these deficiencies; an accusation Sale was keen to defend him against in her writings.

information and explanation in their newspapers. With national reputation and the fate of thousands of soldiers and civilians, including the emotive touchstone of women and children, at stake, 'every particle of intelligence public or private [was] sought'.³

Flaminia Nicora, in her work on literary responses to the 1857 Indian 'Mutiny' notes that as with 'many other violent historical events [...] newspapers [were] keen to exploit the sensationalistic aspect of the incidents'.⁴ The Crimean War (1853-6) and the 'Mutiny' are generally considered to be the earliest conflicts where war reporting in the press influenced widespread public perceptions of the conflicts, with Christopher Bayly describing the 'Mutiny' as 'a modern war of propaganda'.⁵ However, the evidence I present here leads me to suggest that the First Anglo-Afghan War should take precedence as the first nineteenth-century 'media war'.

Letters and journals from the distant conflict in Afghanistan were disseminated to a range of reading audiences. Originally written either as personal diaries or letters to friends and families, they were passed through various channels to the authorities, where they served as official reports to be read out in parliament or to inform military strategy. Articles from the Indian papers were reprinted in the British press: letters read out in the House of Commons were reported in *The Times*; news from abroad was repeated in other national and local papers. In a feature I find surprising given the distance and drama of their situation, many of these published forms returned to the captives in references contained in letters from home or in the newspapers they were allowed by their captors. Somehow, despite all the disadvantages of geographical distance and tribal politics, a functional communication circuit, containing the key

³ *Liverpool Mercury*, 20 May 1842.

⁴ Flaminia Nicora, *The Mutiny Novel 1857-2007: Literary Responses to the Indian Sepoy Rebellion* (New Delhi: Prestige, 2009), pp.36-7. There is some debate over the appropriate name for the unrest of 1857-8 in India. I have chosen to use the term 'Mutiny', giving the conflict one of its more common contemporaneous titles, but using it within inverted commas to acknowledge its inherent complexities.

⁵ C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.319.

elements of Darnton's model, operated in these hostile circumstances.⁶ Bayly notes that in 1857 'a struggle unfolded between the British and the insurgents over the control of modern media of information', but in the early 1840s a similar competition over news control, took place between the British captives and their Afghan captors.⁷ Against a background of considerable surveillance, reports of the true situation of the hostages, the strength of their enemies and the readiness of their rescuers were passed back and forth, enabling the British to more accurately gauge the position of the Afghans. Messengers negotiating the release of the hostages brought letters and newspapers in and took both open letters and (when the opportunity availed) small, secretive tightly folded ones out with them. According to a captive, they received news from Jalalabad through coded messages, 'by dotting off letters of the alphabet in the newspapers, which is an easy mode of carrying on secret correspondence, and not likely to be detected by an Asiatic'.⁸ Many of these messages reached beyond their immediate recipients to the media in India and Britain.

This circulation was facilitated by the recent introduction of steam ships, which speeded up the passage between Britain and India, cutting the journey time to little more than a month. A generation later, in 1869, the Suez Canal was opened, dramatically decreasing the sailing distance of the route around the Cape, or obviating the need for the tiresome overland leg through Egypt. Communication was also enhanced by the introduction of the telegraph, enabling messages to be sent at a speed markedly faster than a human messenger could deliver them. Electrical telegraphy, developed and refined throughout the 1830s and 40s, allowed news to be transmitted overland (development on trans-oceanic connections continued into the 1860s and 70s) from

⁶ See Introduction.

⁷ Bayly, p.317.

⁸ Vincent Eyre, *The Military Operations at Cabul, which ended in the Retreat and Destruction of the British Army, January 1842. With a Journal of Imprisonment in Affghanistan*, 2nd ed. (London: Murray, 1843), p.260. [Hereafter *Operations*].

operator to operator, enabling the rapid transmission of messages from places such as Port Said in Aden or Marseilles in France to London. Kaye wrote in the opening article of the first edition of the *Calcutta Review* in 1844 that 'many of these letters and papers are delivered in London five weeks after they are despatched; and in little more than two months an answer to a letter sent from Bombay may be received at that place'.⁹ Even allowing for the delays in delivering newspapers and letters from the Indian seaports to the tribal strongholds where they were held, the nine-month captivity gave sufficient time for comment and response to track back and forth between the London and provincial press, and the subjects of their editorials and letter pages.

To control the supply of news reaching the British prisoners and to improve their own sources of information, the Afghan chiefs studied the letters and papers that arrived with those engaged with the drawn out diplomacy of hostage negotiations. The munshi Mohan Lal, stranded in Kabul following the death of his employer, Sir Alexander Burnes, had the opportunity of studying the effects of this education in current affairs on the man who replaced the puppet king, Shah Shujah. In his biography of Dost Mohammad he wrote of his son Mohammad Akbar Khan (1816-1845) that 'he has become so conversant with all the affairs of England by newspapers, and the old histories read to him, or related by some of us, the prisoners' that his skilful justifications of Napoleon's cause 'perfectly made me silent'.¹⁰ On his own behalf, Akbar Khan read much into the debates over foreign policy published in the press, to the extent that he was aware:

that since the disasters took place in Afghanistan [...] there has been a universal outcry against [Lord Auckland's] political measures, and that in almost every

⁹ [Kaye], 'English in India', *Calcutta Review*, 1.1 (May 1844), 1-41 (p.3).

¹⁰ Mohan Lal, *Life of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan of Kabul, with his political proceedings towards the English, Russian, and Persian Governments, including the victory and disasters of the British Army in Afghanistan*, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1846), II, pp. 456.

newspaper which we - the prisoners - receive, men do not accuse him so much for the offences he has committed as they accuse and find fault with their own countrymen and authorities.¹¹

The print media also had its practical uses. Doctor Brydon was famously the only survivor of the massacres on the retreat from Kabul to escape both the Afghan sword and captivity and reach Jalalabad. His account of the retreat was written up by an amanuensis at his bedside after a few days' convalescence, then transcribed, rewritten and perhaps carefully edited by the authorities.¹² He described how, on the day before reaching Jalalabad and safety, he was pulled from his horse by his pursuer and 'knocked down by a blow to the head from an Afghan knife, which must have killed me had I not had a portion of a Blackwood's magazine in my forage cap'.¹³ *Blackwood's Magazine*, imported into India and distributed via Mudie's or Thacker as single monthly issues, generally consisting of 130 pages, would have been flexible enough to bend into a forage cap.¹⁴

We encounter Brydon primarily as a reader (or potential reader) of the print media. Florentia Sale is renowned for her contribution to that media, as the letters she wrote gained widespread notice in the newspapers and her journal, subsequently

¹¹ Lal, II, pp. 456-7.

¹² On the bibliographical history of Brydon's report, see William Trousdale, 'Dr Brydon's Report of the Kabul Disaster and Documentation of History', *The Journal of Military Affairs*, 47.1 (February 1983), 26-30.

¹³ William Brydon, 'Doctor Brydon's Ride' in *Lady Florentia Sale: A Journal of the First Afghan War*, ed. Patrick Macrory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 160-8 (p.165).

¹⁴ It would have been a tight fit for the 'Kilmarnock Bonnet' style then worn by some soldiers. If Brydon was an officer or a non-combatant, the style of his headgear may have been different. Whatever the shape of the cap, his unusual storage facility undoubtedly gave him vital protection. My thanks to David Finkelstein for his answer to my query on this subject. Further enlightenment comes from the narrative in *Bentley's Miscellany* (see discussion below) 'It was considered more than likely, that, when Lady Sale was wounded, she had been mistaken for one of the opposite sex, from the circumstances of her wearing an officer's foraging-cap, as the Affghans have a superstitious prejudice against killing a woman; and no other lady was touched.' p.141-2. An oil painting, 'Lady Florentia Sale on retreat from the Kabul disaster, January 1842' (1844) by Richard Thomas Bott, shows Sale in what is presumably an officer's foraging cap.

released in book form onto the marketplace, became the publishing phenomenon of the First Anglo-Afghan War.

Letters to the press

Florentia (Wynch) Sale (c.1787-1853) was born in Madras, the daughter and granddaughter of civil servants in the East India Company. In 1808 she married 'Fighting Bob' Sale, (1782-1845) an intrepid soldier held in high regard by his men because of his determination to lead from the front; even when seniority of rank and numerous war wounds should have convinced him otherwise, 'nothing could induce him to behave himself as a General should do'.¹⁵ She had twelve children (four of whom died in infancy and one in childhood) and accompanied her husband to his postings in Mauritius and Ireland.¹⁶ She returned to India with her children in 1823 when her husband fought in the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26), then joined him at Agra. In 1840 Sale and her adult daughter travelled to Kabul where he was then stationed, joining the steady flow of soldiers' families in a deceptively peaceful Afghanistan.

Lady Sale significantly narrated and interpreted the war through her widely published letters and celebrated journal, written during the siege of Kabul in 1841, the fatal retreat in January 1842 and the nine month captivity which she and the scant hundred survivors endured. Her journal became an instant bestseller and her vivid words and striking character influenced subsequent writings on Afghanistan in more immediate and human terms than Elphinstone's or Scott's broad national types. Given her impact it is curious to see that in 2013, when Lady Sale's text is more widely known than her husband's military career, the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

¹⁵ Macrory (2002), p.xviii.

¹⁶ Bijan Omrani "'Will we make it to Jalalabad?'" 19th Century Travels in Afghanistan' *Asian Affairs*, 37:11 (July 2006), 161-174 (p.170).

continues to treat her as an appendage, summarising her in a 540 word postscript at the end of the entry for Sir Robert Sale.¹⁷

The celebrity status granted to Sale grew from the perception of the reading publics that she embodied every quality that appeared to be missing from the political and military occupying force sent to Kabul. This lioness rampant possessed many of the qualities of a soldier, and her war-like spirit brought her the acclaim of the British press, who found in her a dramatic and popular contrast to the 'miserable incompetency' of 'the old dotard' Major-General William Elphinstone (1782-1842).¹⁸ Elphinstone had distinguished himself at Waterloo, but after nearly 40 years in the British Army, he had neither the physical health nor the strength of resolve to effectively command the garrison at Kabul. According to *The Times*, it was Sale who seemed 'almost alone to have met the emergency with the energy which was not to be found in the superior officers of that devoted army'.¹⁹ She was quickly adopted as 'the heroine of Cabul', 'the wounded captive - the high souled, gallant spirited, Lady Sale' at whose name (the papers assured their readers) 'every British heart will beat with enthusiasm'.²⁰ Her letters and her journal were imbued with the spirit of 'No Surrender' that may have finally helped galvanise the Army of Retribution - which after months of delay was in danger of being renamed the Army of Impotence - to embark on their mission to rescue the captives and punish the Afghans.

Sale's writing is immensely readable, and her blunt, uncompromising style endeared her to her reading public. Her first letter, despatched to her husband on the 9

¹⁷ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/view/article/24533?docPos=2>> [accessed 20 May 2013]. I also note that in *Butcher and Bolt: Two Hundred Years of Foreign Engagement in Afghanistan* (London: Hutchinson, 2008), David Loyn's list of the non-Afghan characters covers 70 names, of which only two are women (Sale and Benazir Bhutto). Florentia Sale's is the only name on the list not to be printed in capital letters (and her place of death is incorrectly given as Britain), p.xxi.

¹⁸ Cousin to Mountstuart Elphinstone.

¹⁹ *Times*, 5 April 1842; 21 April 1842.

²⁰ *Hampshire Advertiser*, 25 February 1843.

November 1841 and published in *The Times* of 21 April 1842, was praised for 'the vigorous language of the writer' that enhanced her 'undaunted spirit [and] collected judgment'.²¹ It set out in the clear terms of a military report the situation of the British contingent in Kabul, their resources, their losses and the strength of the enemy. It was the very text that Sir Robert Peel waved from the despatch box of the House of Commons nearly a year later as 'a memorandum of events in Cabul [...] one more surely indicative of a high and generous and gallant spirit, I never saw'.²²

Sale consciously used military terminology, even to describe natural events, as when hoping 'a soldier's wife may use a soldier's simile' she likened the earthquake that struck Afghanistan during their imprisonment as 'throwing up dust, like the action of exploding a mine'.²³ Her adept use of literary similes drew on her familiarity with Romantic literature, especially Byron's poetry. During the siege at Kabul she described the Afghan forces as 'like a great cluster of bees' (99) and the rush of the enemy as one that 'drove our men before them very like a flock of sheep with a wolf at their heels' (126).²⁴

Others had noticed that her language lacked the customary gentility of the age. Lord Hardinge, Governor-General of India, wrote to his wife in England that his guests at his official residence in Calcutta in 1845 included the now-famous couple, Sir Robert and Lady Sale. In his gossipy letters he described Sale as 'a clever woman, shrewd enough to be on her guard in society but from what I hear very coarse'.²⁵ He was more

²¹ *Times*, 21 April 1842.

²² *Times*, 21 February 1843.

²³ Lady Florentia Sale, *A Journal of the Disasters in Affghanistan, 1841-2* (London: Murray, 1843), p.297. [Hereafter *Journal*. All further references in this section are given within the text].

²⁴ She was alluding to Lord Byron's poem 'The Destruction of Sennacherib' in *Hebrew Melodies* (London: Murray, 1815). The opening line reads 'The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold'.

²⁵ Hardinge to Emily Hardinge, 20 January 1845, *The Letters of the First Viscount Hardinge of Lahore to Lady Hardinge and Sir Walter and Lady James 1844-1847*, ed. by Bawa Satinder Singh, Camden Fourth Series vol 32 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1986), p. 44.

explicit when writing to his step-daughter-in-law about Sale's conduct on a recent sea voyage from England:

She is clever and knowing, like a lady here, but *entre nous*, damning the waiters on board the steamer. Your heroines ought to be eccentric, but Florentia coming out with a direct plain oath is in proof of a maxim of mine, that ship-board tries the temper so boisterously, that the nature is displayed before the passage is at an end.²⁶

Not only did Sale have a soldier's tongue, she also had a soldier's eye. The letters she wrote to her husband, which were passed to the British government and press, provided reports considered more accurate and more trustworthy than the 'false reports industriously spread by the enemy, in the guise of travellers' (106). The letter mentioned above, sent from Sale on 9 November 1841 to her husband at Jalalabad covered the period of 2 to 8 November in succinct detail. She had a reply from him on 18 November that it 'was the only detail of events that had been received' (109) and that copies had been sent to the Commander-in-chief and Governor-General. General Sale confirmed this in another letter received by her on 4 January 1842, writing 'that no other person gives them any idea of our real position in Cabul' (218). Within a few days this 'real position' was that of a decimated Army of Occupation with over 16,000 dead and dying on the route to Jellalabad, but Sale's eyewitness account of British life in Kabul was carried in her letter, freighted with the authority of official recognition, to Britain. It was read out in Parliament and disseminated by Fleet Street, being first printed in *The Times* on 21 April and then extensively reprinted in papers across the country, demonstrating both the hunger for news from Kabul and the trust placed in her account. Sale was informed on 17 May 'that part of my letters regarding the siege had arrived in

²⁶ Hardinge to Lady Sarah James, 23 January 1845, in Singh, p.46.

England, and been laid before the Court of Directors' (349) responsible for policy decisions in the British-controlled parts of the Indian subcontinent. Supplied with newspapers from both India and Britain in addition to letters, Sale was able to trace the debates thrown up by the expanding circles of distribution of her letter, and by 21 August she noted 'a regular controversy' (399) between the papers over what she had written and whether she should have written at all. Robustly noting in her journal that 'if people misunderstand, it is their fault and not mine', she had, she claimed, simply supplied 'details [that] were wanting', yet she was proud that her letters were considered 'of sufficient consequence' to have 'excited some attention in the highest circles' (400). That the editors should misinterpret her prudence for valour, proclaiming her to be leading the troops when she had been called to the front 'for safety's sake' led her to conclude that 'nothing can exceed the folly I have seen in the papers regarding my wonderful self' (408).

Others close to the scene agreed that it would have been better had she not written at all. Serving under General Robert Sale within the fort at Jalalabad was a young officer, Sutherland Orr. In a letter home to his sister Maggy he bemoaned the damage that 'this Cabul business' had inflicted on the reputation of the East India Company's army. It had been spread about in India that:

the Sepoys cannot stand this country and that European troops are positively required, and it has even gone abroad (chiefly on the authority of that old gossiping woman Lady Sale, who by writing mere gossip as genuine fact has done an immeasurable deal of mischief) that the Sepoys did not fight and particularly that their Cavalry was quite unfit to meet the Afghan horse.²⁷

²⁷ Sutherland George Gordon Orr to his sister Maggy in England, 21 July 1842, BL, Sutherland George Gordon Orr papers, mss eur C182, f2, p.2.

Orr's comments, although dealing with the wider communication circuit of Sale's letters and their relay race to the most distant newspaper readers, demonstrates another layer of information transmission with its misinformation and disruptions. Here the concerns over what was written and what was read had more immediate military interests. As Muireann O'Cinneide observes, Sale's eyewitness account challenges the 'official narratives propagated in centres of command', revealing 'a rather astonishing network of conflicting and/or incompetent communications among the beleaguered British forces'.²⁸ Her mixture of war reporting and critique of those in authority was forwarded by her husband to the Commander-in-Chief Sir Jasper Nicolls with the claim that her letter gave details 'which the brief communication from General Elphinstone, that reached me by the same opportunity, does not embrace'.²⁹

Many of the details Sale supplied involved the skirmishes that the Army of Occupation fought against the besieging Afghans at Kabul. She wrote of Shah Shujah 'seated at a window [...] telescope in hand' (61), watching the fighting beyond the city walls. According to her interpretation he had no understanding of what he saw and, despite 'asking the opinion of any of the officers [...] seemed quite *gobrowed* [...] (something between dumbfounded and at one's wits' end)' (61). The General's Lady was anything but *gobrowed* herself. Peering through a crack in the ramparts, she observed and recorded the battle below. During November 1841 this position was her 'post of observation' (123) during any engagement, as, by dodging behind the chimneys, she 'escaped the bullets that continually whizzed past me' (124). So Sale made an explicit comparison between, on the one hand, the befuddled and incompetent Afghan ruler, who despite his 'fine view of the cantonments' (61) where the British were trapped, was

²⁸ Muireann O'Cinneide, 'Conflict and Imperial Communication: Narrating the First Afghan War' in *Conflict and Difference in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, ed. by Dinah Birch and Mark Llewellyn (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 52-65 (p.59).

²⁹ General Sale to General Sir Jasper Nicolls, 19 December 1841, BL, Sir Robert Henry Sale papers, mss eur B415.

unable to interpret what he saw, and on the other, herself as the brave soldier's wife, steadfast in her improvised lookout in the shelled rooftops, contributing to the machinery of surveillance with her accurate military intelligence.

Most references in the newspapers of the time were to this resilient Victorian Boadicea, a heroine later claimed as a proto-suffragette by Millicent Garrett Fawcett for appearing 'to hold that taxation and representation ought to go hand in hand' during the final negotiations for the release of the captives.³⁰ Sale's strong characteristics were occasionally softened and feminised by press attention to the womanly attributes of endurance and passivity. As the captivity lengthened, and before the news of their release had reached Britain, Sale and her daughter were held up as 'examples of magnanimity and patient suffering to those of weaker mould'.³¹ She certainly demonstrated the attributes that make her what Jane Robinson refers to as an 'Ornament of Empire', one of the 'stout-hearted champions of morality and good character' who accompanied their husbands to distant postings on behalf of the British Empire.³² As Bijan Omrani notes, 'her tone, indeed, is like that of Austen, a dry wit and laconic irony; imagine Eliza Bennett transplanted to the Hindu Kush'.³³ Whilst giving a flavour of her writings, the characters in *Pride and Prejudice* did not have to contend with the horrors of massacre, earthquake and insect infestation. A woman apparently unafraid of her captors, her strength of character was shown to best advantage in her own narratives, where naturally a measure of authorial romanticising might come into play. Following

³⁰ Mrs. Henry [Millicent Garrett] Fawcett, *Some Eminent Women of our Times* (London: Macmillan, 1889), p.126. Sale had objected to the women captives being signatories to an agreement over which they had not been consulted.

³¹ *Ipswich Journal*, 15 Oct 1842.

³² Jane Robinson, introduction to Macrory (2002), p.viii.

³³ Omrani, p.170.

conversations with the tribal chief, Ukhbar Khan, Sale wrote mischievously to a friend that 'he says he now understands why Europeans have but one wife'.³⁴

The *Journal* opens in September 1841, with details of minor excursions by the resident British force into the countryside surrounding Kabul, fighting tribal chiefs who were reluctant to submit to the restoration of Shah Shujah to the throne. There is certainly unrest reported in Afghanistan and those who travelled through the passes did so at risk, but fighting was seen as confined to armies on each side; however unorthodox the Afghan fighting methods were by European standards, civilians were relatively safe. It was perhaps the separate militarised nature of this occupation that allowed the Politicals, led by the Envoy Sir William Macnaghten, to convince themselves that Afghans were sufficiently acquiescent to allow the withdrawal of much of the British force that had set him in place.

Sale was less convinced. When she recorded in her journal that Macgregor, political agent, 'writes to the Envoy that the country [...] never was in so tranquil a state as it is at present!' she commented that 'with a little variation in the wording' he could have 'cautiously written [...] that the country was now as quiet as it ever was; which, to those who know [...] indicates any thing but a state of pacification' (24-5). The journal interspersed the preparations, the skirmishes and the deaths which form the daily existence of the military force in Kabul, with observations on the fruitfulness of her garden, with its flowers, potatoes and cauliflowers, and marvelling at the size and flavour of the local grapes and melons, and the plums for which the area is famed.

Within two days of such domestic detail there was an influx of tribesmen into the capital and outbreaks of fighting. Sale's son-in-law Lieutenant John Sturt of the Engineers went to help secure the King's palace, the Bala Hissar, and was stabbed in the

³⁴ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 12 September 1842.

face and shoulder as he entered the precincts. Snatching up her parasol Sale 'walked off as fast as I could' (33) to tend to him. Her description of his wounds, especially those to his face, and of the tender ministrations of her daughter show a clear grasp of medical detail amongst the loving anxiety. The pain and the loss of blood left him weakened and the facial paralysis from damaged nerves were such 'that he could neither swallow nor articulate; and the choking sensation of the blood in his throat was most painful to witness' (34). This dramatic narration, with the response to his recovery - 'with what joy did we hear him faintly utter *bet-ter*' (34) - is redolent with all the heightened emotions of a traditional Victorian literary deathbed or sickbed scene.

Sturt's return to action is more indicative of the urgency of the situation for the British in Cabul than the speed of his physical recovery. As the only officer in the Engineers, within four days of being attacked he 'determined, weak and ill as he was, to go out and do his duty' and went off dressed only 'in his shirt and pyjania [*sic*]' (61) to supervise the necessary storming of a small fort nearby. The brisk activity of Sale herself, a woman who had refused to 'lose time' (33) waiting for her palanquin when she first heard of Sturt's wounding, and of the patient himself, spurred into action 'having fretted himself half mad at everything going wrong' (61), was clearly contrasted to the inertia of those in charge; the old, sick and irresolute General Elphinstone and the Envoy Macnaghten, full of false cheer and double dealings. Partly as a defence against the blame for their poor defensive situation in Kabul later aimed at the engineer in charge, her son-in-law Sturt, and partly in coruscation of 'the state of supineness and fancied security of those in power in the cantonments', Sale laid the responsibility for the crisis on India's Governor-General Lord Auckland 'whose sovereign will and pleasure it is that tranquillity do reign in Affghanistan; in fact, it is reported at Government House, Calcutta, that the lawless Affghans are as peaceable as London citizens' (38). The bad judgement and negligent leadership from both the political and

military contingents enraged Sale's rampant militaristic instincts and she sardonically concluded 'most dutifully do we appear to shut our eyes on our probable fate' (38).

Sturt's almost perpetual motion within the indefensible cantonments made it seem as if he 'nearly possesses the power of ubiquity' (93). Unable yet to mount his own horse, he 'must astonish my little Cape horse, for he gallops him the whole day from bastion to gate, and gate to bastion, laying guns, and off like a shot' (93-4). Only two months after being stabbed, and two days into the deadly march to Jalalabad, ninety miles through the frozen passes, Sale again portrayed Sturt as the acme of energetic duty and courageous leadership. Here the inactivity and paralysis came not only from the mismanagements and failings of General Elphinstone but also from the bitter cold which decimated the 4,000 troops and 12,000 camp followers, unprepared and unprovisioned in the depths of an Afghan winter.³⁵ The route was littered with frozen corpses and abandoned baggage, and a cask of spirits was broached by the artillerymen who 'became too much excited' (232). Alcohol proved useful during the march, and, after hours on horseback, Sale herself 'felt very grateful for a tumbler of sherry, which at any other time would have made me very unlady-like, but now merely warmed me' (234). The 'fully *primed* [artillerymen] declared that they were ashamed at our inactivity, and vowed they would charge the enemy', and only 'restrained their ardour' after Sturt told them 'their lives were too valuable to be risked at such a moment' (233) but that he would go with them should their services be required later.

Within hours Sturt was riding out from a place of comparative safety back into the Khoord-Kabul pass to rescue a fellow officer. He 'received a severe wound in the abdomen' (237) and was brought into the makeshift camp, but the details of his injury and his condition were here left to a minimum, with the maelstrom of panicked escapes

³⁵ Troop numbers had been depleted by casualties during the siege and by those who had left with General Sale for Jalalabad.

and deadly attacks filling the pages with vignettes of mass killings and random survival. Whilst anonymous camp followers and soldiers fell to the cold, the gun and the sword, it was the 'ladies' (the officers' wives), along with their children, who were mentioned individually and their deaths, abductions or arrival in camp noted in her *Journal*. Sale herself was shot, a point made with her customary phlegmatic style: 'I had fortunately only *one* ball *in* my arm; three others passed through my poshteen [...] without doing me any injury' (237). They spent a sleepless night packed into a small tent, with the sepoys and camp followers desperately trying 'to force their way, not only into the tent, but actually into our beds' (242-3). The next day a short journey in a camel pannier 'accelerated' Sturt's death 'and we had the sorrowful satisfaction of giving him Christian burial' (244), the only member of the retreating force to receive one.

Without histrionics, Sale continued to record events, occasionally written in the present tense. She detailed the negotiations with Mohammed Akbar Khan, son of the deposed and exiled king Dost Mohammed Khan. When news reached Britain that Mohammed Akbar Khan had suggested the ladies and children be handed over to him for safekeeping and that not only they, but many of the married officers and General Elphinstone himself had taken this opportunity for self-preservation, there was public outcry. Sale appears to have anticipated this controversy and avoided it by claiming that 'overwhelmed with domestic affliction', neither she nor her daughter 'were in a fit state to decide for ourselves' on the matter and 'all I personally know of the affair is, that I was told we were all to go' (246). Taken away into a captivity which was to last nine months, she made the narrative decision to 'divide the account' by giving her 'own personal adventures; and afterwards, from the same date, follow up the fortunes of our unhappy army, from the journals of friends' (247). This provides a suitable juncture at which to consider the most significant alternative narratives, notably the journal of a fellow captive, Vincent Eyre.

Published Memoirs

John Murray, a prestigious publishing firm and Queen Victoria's official publisher, was established in 1768.³⁶ The firm's list of authors included novelists and poets such as Jane Austen, Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron. Murray also specialised in travel writings such as Elphinstone's *Kingdom* and other non-fictional writings such as memoirs giving eyewitness accounts of conflicts in distant parts of the empire. Another of Murray's authors, Elizabeth Rigby (1809-1893), author, art critic and contributor to the *Quarterly Review*, acknowledged the appeal of Sale's *Journal* to the publisher: 'I am perfectly aware that Lady Sale has taken that position in your affections which, with her military knowledge, she will not fail securely to fortify'.³⁷ Newly settled in Edinburgh, Rigby begged 'now, dear Mr. Murray, banish Lady Sale a moment from your thoughts & think of me as your's most truly'.³⁸ Unfortunately the John Murray archive, held by the National Library of Scotland, which contains the publisher's ledgers for both Sale's *Journal* and that of Vincent Eyre, does not have any further material relating to the publication of Sale's book, published in April 1843. However, a series of letters between Eyre's brother, the Reverend Edward Eyre, and John Murray between November 1842 and October 1845, reveals in some detail the bibliographical history of his journal, *Operations*.

Lieutenant Vincent Eyre (1811-1881) was commissary of ordnance while stationed at Kabul from 1840-42, where his wife and young son joined him. Like many other survivors of the retreat from Kabul, the Eyres lost all their personal effects, to the extent that a fellow officer was deputed on Mary Eyre's behalf to beg the use of a needle from Lady Sale - an attempt that sadly failed. During the months of captivity,

³⁶ On John Murray, see also Smiles and the house history by Humphrey Carpenter, *The Seven Lives of John Murray: The Story of a Publishing Dynasty, 1768-2002* (London: Murray, 2008).

³⁷ Elizabeth Rigby to John Murray, 12 January 1843, *The Letters of Elizabeth Rigby, Lady Eastlake*, ed. by Julie Sheldon (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p.77.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p.78.

Eyre wrote his own reminiscences 'penned to relieve the monotony of an Affghan prison' which he supplemented with his sketches of fellow prisoners.³⁹ He sent his journal in parts 'as it was finished, and as opportunity offered, to military friends in India' who forwarded it to the family in Britain.⁴⁰

Eyre's brother, the Reverend Edward Eyre, acting on his brother's wishes, offered the journal to John Murray. Publishing it was an opportunity to give an eyewitness account of events, which were, when the agreement with Murray was first made, still 'a matter of painful uncertainty'.⁴¹ Arriving piecemeal, Edward edited the parts before forwarding them to Murray; an arrangement that meant the book was ready for publication earlier than could otherwise be managed, and it was published in January 1843.⁴² This dependence upon a long and unreliable chain of communication caused Edward suffered considerable anxiety when the latest part failed to arrive in the Indian Mail of 25 November 1842, and his letter to Murray (the first of his letters in the archive) contemplates the possibilities of it having been lost in transit.⁴³ This happened, according to Eyre's preface to the 1879 revised version, when 'on one occasion a considerable portion was lost in transit and had to be entirely re-written, no

³⁹ *Operations*, p.vii.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.v.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.v.

⁴² Vincent Eyre's *The Military Operations at Cabul, which ended in the Retreat and Destruction of the British Army, January 1842* (London: Murray, 1843) was reviewed in *The Times* from 5 January 1843, continued on 6, 7 and 12 January. An advertisement had appeared in *The Times* on 27 December 1842, announcing that John Murray would be publishing *Diary of a Prisoner in Affghanistan* by Lieutenant Vincent Eyre on 'Saturday', which would be 31 December 1842, but the change of title and the clear dating of the first edition as 1843 indicate a delay of a few days until the book was released in the first week of January 1843. Murray's ledger entry dated 6 January 1843 shows all 1,000 copies sold or presented. The second edition, published later in January, sold all 2,500 copies, and the 1,500 copies of the third edition sold out in February. Later editions were expanded to include *With a Journal of Imprisonment in Affghanistan*, JMA, MS42729, pp.287, 288, 290.

⁴³ While the subsidies were paid to the chiefs to keep the communication routes between Kabul and India open, correspondence took 3-4 weeks to reach Calcutta, with Henry Havelock considering that 'the transmission of letters to our own provinces was as regular as between Calcutta and any station in Bengal'. When Macnaghten stopped the payments, all traffic of troops, supplies and communication was effectively blocked and messengers took great risks passing letters back and forth. See Dalrymple, pp.121-3, 276.

copy having been kept'.⁴⁴ A more ominous possibility was political interference: Edward worried that it was 'just possible that Ld Ellenborough may have been a party to its detention, as my brother's friend to whom it was consigned is his private secretary'.⁴⁵ The same Indian Mail that failed to bring Eyre's writings did bring consolation in the news of the captives' release. On 25 November *The Times* calmly made the announcement at the end of the latest despatches from the war with China (which covered nine columns) and then Afghanistan (three columns). The provincial newspapers of 26 November were more dramatic in their headlines, which proclaimed the release of 'the noble Lady Sale' and the rest of the prisoners.⁴⁶

There were accusations that Eyre's journal had been published with indecent haste, especially as in India the official enquiry and the courts martial relating to the behaviour of British officers - including Eyre himself - was still being held. Edward ingeniously argued that there had not been 'any anxiety that this account should be the first' and instead concentrated on there having been 'sufficient delay [...] that all such investigations will have been closed before a copy of this book can find its way to India'.⁴⁷ Indeed it did seem, at least to the anxious Edward, that the delay was longer than expected, as 'in Calcutta I hear there was a "perfect scramble" for the few copies which had got out - but piratical newspapers etc may soon satisfy the public' where 'everybody is wanting but nobody can get the book in India'.⁴⁸

This was not the only delay concerning Edward. His brother remained in India to be cleared by the enquiry, but was then prevented from leaving due to lack of funds.

⁴⁴ Vincent Eyre, *The Kabul Insurrection of 1841-42: Revised and corrected from Lieutenant Eyre's original manuscript*, ed. by George Bruce Malleson (London: Allen, 1879), p.iv. [Hereafter *Insurrection*].

⁴⁵ Edward Eyre [EE] to John Murray [JM], 26 November 1842, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, John Murray Archive, MS40389. [Hereafter JMA] The private secretary was Henry Marion Durand, who later wrote *The First Afghan War and its Causes* (1879).

⁴⁶ *Scotsman*, 26 November 1842.

⁴⁷ *Operations*, p.v-vi.

⁴⁸ EE to JM, 22 June 1843; 11 August 1843, JMA, MS40389.

Financial difficulties had been exacerbated by Mary Eyre's brother, who, as trustee of her fortune, had spent it himself whilst she was imprisoned in Afghanistan. Edward appealed to Murray on Eyre's account and the payment of the author's one half share of the profits was hurried through the books. Murray's additional offer of two hundred guineas for the copyright 'to assist in relieving your Brother's sudden and unexpected emergencies' was rejected by Edward, after his father passed on 'the opinions of distinguished authors on subjects of Military interest. He said that the work ought to realise to my brother £800 or £1000'.⁴⁹ His mother, meanwhile, had 'heard a person say that 10,000 had been sold, and that the author would get £3,000'.⁵⁰ With high expectations of lucrative sales, fed by the persistent and unwelcome interference of his anxious parents, Edward's letters to Murray veered from sycophantic pleading to querulous accusations of impropriety which prompted some sharp responses. Edward frequently retreated into feigned ignorance of business matters, claiming to 'have only had trouble, and anxiety, with considerable expense, too, for a county curate, in the matters'.⁵¹ With letters from Eyre and his wife in India, awaiting news of whether sales have been sufficient to fund their return to Britain, Edward bemoaned 'the great delay [...] before the Author's brains get into his pockets' but he did manage to improve the terms for his brother.⁵² Originally given one half of the profits, after 1,000 copies of the first edition sold out within days Edward successfully argued that 'in the case of no risk, and such a rapid sale' Eyre's share should be increased to two thirds.⁵³ This arrangement covered the second and subsequent editions, including the delayed conclusion of the journal, which was first published as a separate appendix to be bound into the earlier editions.

⁴⁹ JM to EE, 12 January 1843, JMA, MS41911; EE to JM, 23 January 1843, JMA, MS40389.

⁵⁰ EE to JM, 26 January 1843, *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² EE to JM, 13 January 1843, *Ibid.*

⁵³ EE to JM, 23 January 1843, *Ibid.*

Murray produced three editions of Eyre's *Operations* in January and February, totalling 5,000 copies, which quickly sold at 9s. 6d. The Appendix *A Journal of Imprisonment in Affghanistan* was produced in March. Designed to be bound into the end of *Operations*, and, retailing at 3s. 6d., 3,000 of the 4,000 printed were sold. The fourth edition, complete with appendix and co-joined title, sold out its 1,000 copies in March at 12s but of the 1,000 copies of the fifth edition produced in June, half were remaindered by the end of the year.⁵⁴ While giving Eyre an income of £1,110 overall, the rapid drop in sales indicates the popularity of his work fell away after some six months, possibly because competing narratives came on to the market or because the public were no longer interested in Afghanistan.⁵⁵ Eyre did have the distinction of writing 'the first connected narrative yet published'.⁵⁶ Reviewers commended 'the entire truthfulness' of the narrative, which was so 'fearfully tragic in its nature' that 'we have wept over the details of the slaughter of our countrymen [...] as related in a work of harrowing interest by Lieutenant Eyre'.⁵⁷ Mohan Lal, who went to Kabul with Sir Alexander Burnes as part of the political delegation and was held captive in the city after Burnes' murder, wrote in his 1846 account of Dost Mohammed Khan and events in Afghanistan that 'no better account is given of these disasters than that of Lieutenant Eyre, who, as a Christian and an upright person, has spoken the truth freely'.⁵⁸

A reputation for authenticity came not simply from whether the account tallied with those of others, but with explicit naming of the author within those other writings. Recognition, for Eyre, came from the pen of his fellow captive and literary rival, Sale herself. Her letter of 9 November 1841, containing the observations of the British

⁵⁴ JMA, Publication ledger, MS42729, pp.287, 288, 290.

⁵⁵ Evidence for a drop in interest comes from *ILN*, where mention of Afghanistan falls from 40 in the seven months of production in 1842, to 29 in 1843 and 15 in 1844. By 1848 there is one solitary reference. (For graphs showing the numbers of hits, arranged in units of five years, see Appendix).

⁵⁶ *North Wales Chronicle*, 24 January 1843.

⁵⁷ *Hampshire Advertiser*, 14 January 1843; *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 26 January 1843; *Bury and Norwich Post*, 18 January 1843.

⁵⁸ Lal, II.431.

besieged in Kabul in the first week of November and published first in *The Times* on 21 April 1842, was reprinted in the national and local press, giving it an exceptionally wide circulation. In it she twice referred to Eyre in connection with the frantic military activity of trying to defend the cantonments from the surrounding Afghans. Eyre and Warburton were the two remaining 'artillery-officers' and Eyre accompanied Sturt on his inspection rounds of their defences. This 'celebrated letter', waved by Peel from the despatch box of the House of Commons, was quickly adopted by the Press as a touchstone of honesty and moral strength amidst the confusions of war and the humiliations of defeat. When extracts of Eyre's *Operations* were printed in the press, readers were reminded that this was an officer 'whose name is prominently mentioned in the celebrated letter of Lady Sale'.⁵⁹

This authority allowed Eyre to consider a higher purpose than that of Sale's one-woman intelligence agency. He consciously stepped out into the area of political influence by claiming that 'I shall have written an instructive lesson to rulers and subjects, to generals and armies'.⁶⁰ Where she observed, he interpreted; where she wrote with ironic humour, he made serious accusations. His account was read by many in authority and quoted by the Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel and others during parliamentary debates. When Lord Ellenborough's proclamation came under discussion, a speech by Sir R. Inglis included the admission 'that there was a great military disaster, which, if we may take Lieutenant Eyre's statement, might have been prevented'.⁶¹ Edward Eyre wrote to John Murray noting that the 'book was mentioned by Sir R. Peel in the House, and received with "loud cheers"'.⁶² Days later Peel quoted extensively from *Operations* during his vote of thanks to the Governor-General of India

⁵⁹ *Scotsman*, 27 July 1842; *Manchester Guardian*, 11 January 1843.

⁶⁰ *Operations*, p.130.

⁶¹ Speech in the House of Commons, 9 February 1843, reported in *Times*, 10 February 1843.

⁶² EE to JM, 11 February 1843, JMA, MS40389.

and those who served in Afghanistan.⁶³ It was during this same debate that Sale's 'celebrated letter' was flourished from the despatch box.

Such popular sympathy, stirred up by the published writings of the captives, supported by the political advantages to which they were put by members of the new administration in Parliament, created a storm of indignation against those who had made the fatal decisions which lead to the loss of so many in the Afghan passes. 'Lady Sale confirms, in every particular, the statements of that officer [Eyre] and there can now be no room to doubt [...] the gross incapacity and misconduct of those in authority'.⁶⁴ Further support for Eyre appeared in a quieter fashion. Edward Eyre's copy of his brother's book is held in the British Library. In the endpapers he copied out press reviews and additional material, including an extract of a letter to the Editor from one of the captives Captain Colin MacKenzie, whose own memoirs were not published until 1886. Within months of Eyre's book being printed, MacKenzie advised Murray that 'were I in your place I should avoid answering all the puerile attacks and aspersions founded on what, in courtesy, we must call ignorance of the subject [...] I assert that his Narrative cannot be impugned in any respect'.⁶⁵

Eyre, a not untalented artist, had drawn portraits of his fellow captives, although Kaye remarked that, 'however commendable as works of art, [they] bear no resemblance whatever to the parties indicated'.⁶⁶ Published in 1843 as *Prison Sketches*, these lithographs, re-drawn by Lowes Cato Dickinson, were designed to be bound in either his or Lady Sale's journals with respective instructions to the bookbinders for the arrangements of the plates.⁶⁷ In America, Carey and Hart of Philadelphia printed an

⁶³ Speech in the House of Commons, 20 February 1843, reported in *Times*, 21 February 1843.

⁶⁴ *Times*, 18 April 1843.

⁶⁵ Captain Colin MacKenzie to JM, 21 June 1843, BL, Sir Vincent Eyre papers, mss eur A42.

⁶⁶ [Kaye], 'English in India', p.7.

⁶⁷ Vincent Eyre, *Prison Sketches: Comprising Portraits of the Cabul Prisoners and Other Subjects* (London: Dickinson, 1843).

eighty-page version of his Journal in double column format, taken from Murray's fourth edition.⁶⁸ In October 1845 Edward corresponding with Murray regarding the costs of independently publishing a smaller edition of his brother's book. Told that '2000 at 6/- a copy would barely cover the outlay', he retreated behind the suggestion that the recipient of the letter 'pray ask Mr Murray to consider it [...] for his Colonial Library'.⁶⁹ Such editions brought out by Murray and other publishers were reprints of popular titles in a series of smaller format books, whose relative cheapness and portability made them more attractive to overseas travellers.

In 1868 from his winter home in Pau in the South of France, the retired Major-General Vincent Eyre himself wrote to John Murray, offering the enclosed revised preface for a 'proposed re-vivification of my old Cabul narrative' as 'your good father published the original'.⁷⁰ Eyre was hopeful that it was a suitable time to reintroduce a subject that 'may prove interesting to the public [by] reminding the country of what occurred as a consequence of our first invasion of Affghanistan'.⁷¹ Eyre's thirty-eight page *Retrospect of the Affghan War* was published in 1869, and his *Operations* reappeared in 1879, at the time of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, now published by Allen and without the assistance of his brother Edward.⁷² This work, renamed *The Kabul Insurrection of 1841-42*, was revised by the author himself, and edited by the distinguished military historian George Bruce Malleeson, who also completed and co-authored Kaye's extensive history of the 1857 'Mutiny'.

⁶⁸ Vincent Eyre, *The Military Operations at Cabul, which ended in the Retreat and Destruction of the British Army, January 1842. With a Journal of Imprisonment in Affghanistan* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1843).

⁶⁹ EE to JM, 31 October 1845, JMA, MS40389.

⁷⁰ Vincent Eyre to JM, 23 January 1868, JMA, MS40389.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Vincent Eyre, *A Retrospect of the Affghan War: With Reference to Passing Events in Central Asia* (London: Allen, 1869); Vincent Eyre, *The Kabul Insurrection of 1841-42: Revised and corrected from Lieutenant Eyre's original manuscript*, ed. by George Bruce Malleeson (London: Allen, 1879) [hereafter *Insurrection*].

In the preface to *Insurrection*, Eyre acknowledged that in the intervening years 'the public mind seemed to have grown weary of the matter' after the journal of his 'distinguished fellow-captive Lady Sale, seemed amply sufficient to supply whatever popular appetite might still survive for so pitiful a "supper of horrors"'.⁷³ According to the figures I have extracted from *ILN*, there was certainly no encouragement to dwell on Afghanistan during this interim. Between 1845 and 1877, only three years have hits in double figures, and the most significant references relate to the rise of the 'Central Asian Question' (1873) and the publication of Bellew's *From the Indus to the Tigris* (1874).⁷⁴ But in 1879, with another war looming, the hit rate soars to 165 as Eyre observed 'a general rush to the book-shelves' and he responded to 'the newly awakened popular impulse' by reissuing his narrative, albeit with cuts to the 'commentaries on the acts of officers' he had earlier deemed necessary 'to instigate public enquiry'.⁷⁵

At the time that the first letters from those caught up in the events in Afghanistan arrived in Britain, the conclusion was still undecided. The captives, that 'scanty residue' (of whom an anonymous poet feared for the women's 'jeopardied lives / and perill'd honour') were under threat of execution, as had happened to an ill-fated expedition to nearby Bokhara, or of being sold into slavery.⁷⁶ With the prisoners confined together in the rough accommodations provided by their captors, it was a useful distraction to keep a journal, albeit that a 'scanty [...] supply of stationery'

⁷³ *Insurrection*, p.iii.

⁷⁴ Henry Walter Bellew, *From the Indus to the Tigris: a narrative of a journey through the countries of Balochistan, Afghanistan, Khorassan and Iran, in 1872: together with a synoptical grammar and vocabulary of the Brahoe language, etc.* (London: Trübner, 1874) was reviewed in *ILN* on 24 January 1874, but only in *The Times* on 1 April 1875. Bellew was the author of the unnamed source of information on Kafiristan, offered to the two loafers in Kipling's short story, and dismissed by Carnehan with 'Blow Bellew!', 'The Man Who Would Be King' in *The Man Who Would Be King: Selected Stories of Rudyard Kipling*, ed. by Jan Montefiore (London: Penguin, 2011), p.106.

⁷⁵ *Insurrection*, p.vi.

⁷⁶ C.J.C., 'The Slaughter of Cabul', *Colonial Magazine and Commercial-Maritime Journal* (August-December 1842), p.349. Colonel Stoddart and Captain Arthur Connolly, sent to gather information on the kingdom of Bokhara, were imprisoned and eventually killed. Sale commented on their confinement 'in a dungeon underground' in her *Journal*, p.376.

necessitated a manuscript 'cramped into the smallest possible space'.⁷⁷ Sale's journal was one of the few possessions that had survived the chaos of the retreat where she 'lost everything except the clothes I wore'; she crucially kept hold of the 'small bag [...] tied [...] round my waist' (2) containing these papers. Others 'had recourse to memory afterwards' (2) including Lieutenant Eyre, but Sale's published account had the unique claim to be a contemporaneous eyewitness account. *The Times* emphasised that 'this is the only [journal] that will reach this country of which some considerable portion has not been drawn from memory'.⁷⁸ Perhaps it was this factor, as she claimed to have 'not only daily noted down events as they occurred, but often did so hourly', as much as her direct language which gives her account an immediacy lacking in that of Eyre's, with its conscious prolepsis, hindsight and critical analysis of his officers' actions.⁷⁹

None of the newspaper reviews questioned the authenticity or compositional history of Sale's journal. Yet an alternative narrative, published in *Bentley's Miscellany* in July 1843 (and completed in a subsequent issue) cast a different interpretation on the motives for keeping diaries, more closely connected to the existence of the communication circuits of letters and newspapers between Britain and Afghanistan. Under the cover of anonymity, the author, fellow captive Mrs Amelia Anderson, wrote that in early March 1842:

our party were seized with a scribbling mania. Every one seemed occupied in composing "the only true and particular account" of the Cabul insurrection. Diaries were ante-dated, and made to assume the tone and character of memoranda written at the period. Those who had the most retentive memories, or fertile inventions, were likely to prove the most successful in this employment. This *cacoethes* may be attributed chiefly to the newspapers sent us

⁷⁷ *Insurrection*, p.iv.

⁷⁸ *Times*, 18 April 1843.

⁷⁹ Sale quoted in *Times*, 18 April 1843.

from Jalalabad; they were all teeming with extracts from certain letters written from Cabul, and pretending to detail facts. I say pretending, because these so-called facts were many of them much of the Baron-Munchausen strain, and only had place in the writers' imagination.⁸⁰

This account not only challenges the accuracy of the diaries, it attributes their very creation to the reader response within the enthusiastic newspaper reports and editorials, themselves responses to the sparse trickle of news escaping through the letters and reports from captives and combatants. From the timing, it was likely to be the large packet of letters and newspapers from friends in India and Britain that the captives received on 14 February, sent from Jalalabad, which sparked this 'scribbling' outburst.⁸¹ By this date Sale's letter on the siege would have had time to circulate through the newspapers in India, but not yet complete the journey to Britain (where it first appeared in *The Times* on 21 April) and back. As through the intervention of the press their letters stirred interest firstly in India, and later in Britain, so those very press reports fired the hostages to supply the accounts of siege and captivity eagerly sought by newspaper readers.

Eyre's journal was published in book form before any other participants in the conflict had their narratives ready for release. At a time when 'tremulous expectancy stood on tip-toe with such intense eagerness to catch the first sound of each coming rumour' being the first in print would have a definite commercial value.⁸² Edward had kept an anxious watch on the emerging market for Afghan memoirs, writing to Murray:

⁸⁰ [Amelia Anderson] 'The English Captives at Cabul: a Personal Narrative by One of the Female Prisoners', *Bentley's Miscellany*, volume 14 (July-December 1843) pp.1-10, 140-162, p.159. The author is confirmed as Mrs Amelia Anderson by the transcribed narrative held with her husband's journal at BL, William Anderson papers, mss eur C703. *Cacoethes scribendi* derives from Juvenal's *Satires* and refers to an insatiable urge or persistent itch to write.

⁸¹ *Journal*, p.295; *Operations*, p.262.

⁸² [Kaye], 'The Administration of Lord Ellenborough', *CR*, 1.2 (1844), 508-562 (p.508).

I do not think that there can be several, nor have any more (except Lady Sale's) proposing to narrate the occurrences at Cabul. My brother in his preface thanks (in assistance and information towards his work) almost all the survivors who could have written a rival one.⁸³

Confirmation of the corroborative nature of Eyre's work (which contributed to its authority) came from a 'rival' composition of which Edward was still unaware. Amelia Anderson's anonymous narrative from *Bentley's Miscellany* was only 32 pages in length, thin on military matters as the author chose not to 'make any reference to the army', and serialised in a popular monthly journal (albeit one with a wide circulation), rather than published in book form. In it the author took her venomous revenge on Sale by heavily promoting Eyre's work:

I have seen nearly all these narratives; that of Captain Eyre is by far the best. He has been assisted in his relation of facts by those who had been actors in them. He had more ample means of collecting information than the writers of any publication that has yet appeared; and, instead of writing a fictitious journal, he wrote a good, honest, and correct 'narrative'.⁸⁴

The collaborative nature of his work was commended by Mrs Anderson as an aspect in which the captives contributed positively. Her husband, Captain William Anderson, kept his own journal that, although not published, contradicted Sale's claim to be the only extant record of the siege and the retreat. His narrative comprises a diarised record on the right-hand page of his tall (33cms by 15cms) journal with its marbled covers and red leather spine, and his commentary and musings on the left-hand

⁸³ EE to JM, 26 November 1842, JMA.

⁸⁴ *Bentley's Miscellany*, pp.2, 159. She did not think highly of the older captives, such as the Ladies Macnaghten and Sale, 'from the beginning to the end of our trials, it was a demonstrated fact, that throughout the whole party patience was exemplified in a inverse ration to years; and the young and the delicate set an example of meek resignation and Christian fortitude that some of the seniors would have done well to imitate'. p.142.

pages. At the back he recorded recipes for tomato sauce and gingerbread and remedies both medical and veterinary. Coinciding with his wife's entry on the rise of the 'scribbling mania', he recorded that 'Lady Sale has got Melville's notes to make extracts from!! Poor man!'.⁸⁵ In July the hapless Melville was again subject to Sale's incursions into his memoirs, as '[she] has got [his] journal again - she is not likely to have anything of interest unextracted'.⁸⁶ Two days later she turned her attention to other unwilling collaborators: 'Lady Sale at Lawrence and me for more particulars - I gave her a yarn yesterday'.⁸⁷

Unsurprisingly Anderson supports his wife's opinion of Sale's work, but where she chose the circumspection of veiled allusions and anonymity, he was more explicit in his criticism. Encouraged by their enforced proximity and the dearth of reading material, the reading of one another's captivity diaries appears to have been common practice. It is unclear whether anyone dared to publically voice criticism of what they read, so this very early version of a writers' collective may have been more outwardly restrained than modern counterparts. Nevertheless, Anderson recorded on 7 June 'Got Lady Sale's journal to read. Such a preface!'.⁸⁸ On the left-hand of the following page, the side he reserved for commentary, he explained in detail his strong objections to this key section of her journal; her claims to have written as events unfolded and that as no one else saved any papers, hers was the only record not written from memory. He countered with the accusation that:

Her Ladyship is wrong in both conclusions. Many errors in facts and dates contradict the facts, many copious extracts from Melville, erasures, recent additions of interleaving and the mention of events that she has only lately

⁸⁵ Anderson, 8 March 1842, p.22, BL, William Anderson papers, mss eur C703.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 8 July 1842, p.40.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 10 July 1842, p.40.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 7 June 1842, p.34.

gleaned from many of us, and Lawrence and myself having saved all our private papers and the former many public ones proved that more and better means, for writing an account of the Cabul insurrection, are still extant than any her Ladyship can have access to.⁸⁹

Anderson marked his journal 'PRIVATE' in bold black letters and, to preserve a degree of civility, one can only hope that Sale respected such clear boundaries. It reveals that Sale's preface was already written in a form very close to the finished version. This was no Editor's appendage such as Edward Eyre attached to his brother's narrative, this was the careful construct consistently maintained by Sale herself in her letters and the newspapers, that she would 'publish everything, as she has taken notes of the whole proceedings'.⁹⁰ It was the issue taken up by *The Times* in its review, that readers could 'depend more upon [her journal's] accuracy than upon the correctness of other works [...] which have been drawn up solely, or even in part, from recollection'.⁹¹

James Airey, originally held captive in Kabul before joining Sale and the other hostages, confirmed the simmering resentments against Sale herself and against her version of events. He claimed to be 'amused' at how she had 'gulled the public' with the 'pure invention' of her account of the Kabul siege, but wrote that her fellow prisoners 'are violently enraged against her and intend writing, they say, a denial of most of her Journal'.⁹² He himself attempted the 'hateful task' of writing a journal, despite 'the feeling of nausea that comes over me whenever I am writing it and the horror of being expected not only to write but to talk for ever on the same infernal subject'.⁹³ The

⁸⁹ Anderson, 7 June 1842, p.35.

⁹⁰ *Observer*, 16 October 1842.

⁹¹ *Times*, 18 April 1843.

⁹² James Airey to Richard Airey, 24 October 1842, Hereford, Herefordshire Record Office, E47/A/12.

⁹³ James Airey to Harriet Airey, 9 August 1843, E47/A/19; James Airey to Richard Airey, 8 August 1843, E47/A/18. To his brother he explained his difficulties due to the strict surveillance under which he wrote, 'our communications were forced to be written on the smallest possible bits of paper, in invisible ink or starch, these were rolled up and hid by the messengers, sometimes in their ears, or beard, or up their

'fearful monotony' of his imprisonment did not make a narrative 'that could possibly interest anyone' and when the steamer carrying the majority of his journal was wrecked, he considered that his family had 'not lost much by it I daresay'.⁹⁴

Airey might not have greatly felt the loss of his own journal, but the unknown whereabouts of Sale's original manuscript, the journal which had been kept safe in a bag tied around her waist, adversely affects on-going research. Rory Stewart, reviewing a recent book on Afghanistan in the *New York Review of Books*, describes Sale's diary as 'written on tattered sheaves of cheap paper [which] survives in the British Library', yet the diary held in the British Library is too neat, tidy and unblemished to be the original journal.⁹⁵ There is very little evidence of the privations of the retreat and captivity or the erasures, additions and interleaving mentioned by Anderson. Instead, I believe it is a fair copy prepared for the printers, in regular handwriting on good quality paper, with spaces left around the embossed stamp in the corners giving no hint of the shortages of writing materials mentioned by the captives. The National Archives catalogue 'Lady Sale's journal at Cabul', but this consists of two copies of a letter from Sale to her husband (neither of which appear to be in her handwriting, when compared with her letters to Lord Ellenborough) detailing recent events of the siege at Kabul during November and December 1841.⁹⁶ Eyre's narrative at the British Library is a printed and bound proof copy, annotated on the end papers; the original manuscript, if still extant, is elsewhere.

nostrils, and often placed in a quill and poked up another place that shall be unmentionable. This was no way to send the sheets of a book by'.

⁹⁴ James Airey to Richard Airey, 8 August 1843, E47/A/18; James Airey to Richard Airey, 15 October 1843, E47/A/21.

⁹⁵ Rory Stewart, 'Lessons from Afghanistan', *New York Review of Books*, 16 August 2012, a review of Diana Preston's *The Dark Defile: Britain's Catastrophic Invasion of Afghanistan, 1838-1842* (London: Walker, 2013).

⁹⁶ Internal evidence indicates that this undated letter was written after 18 November 1842. London, National Archives, PRO 30/12/32/3; PRO 30/12/21/11.

Eyre's journal was undoubtedly published in book form before any other participants in the conflict had their narratives ready for release. Three months later, in April 1843, Sale's *Journal* was published. Reassured by better than expected demand in the marketplace, Murray printed an initial run of 2,500 copies instead of the cautious 1,000 of Eyre's work. Through her letters in the newspapers, Sale was more celebrated than even Murray had calculated and the book, selling at 12s, quickly sold out. A further 4,500 were printed in 3 runs within the month with another 500 reprinted in June, and by the end of that month less than 400 of the 7,500 copies remained in hand.⁹⁷ The sales figures then appear to have come to a near standstill. Less than 50 were sold from mid-1844 to mid-1845, when the rest were remaindered, in a sales pattern that replicates the boom and slump of Eyre's narrative.

This rapid drop in interest in both Eyre's and Sale's narratives reflects the falling away of Afghanistan as a subject for discussion in the newspapers. The *ILN*, if we extrapolate the 40 hits from May 1842 to a theoretical run of publication from January of that year and covering news of the retreat, would be likely to reach 60-80 hits. The 29 hits for 1843 therefore indicate a drop of between 50-60% from the year previously - this at the time of the publishing sensations of Eyre and Sale. 1844, with its 15 hits would be another 50% fall, which slows somewhat in 1845 (11 hits) before sliding into single figures for the next two decades. This drop in interest in Afghanistan is confirmed by data from *The Times*, which shows falls of around 60% each year from 1842 (246 hits) to 1845 (20).⁹⁸ It is a useful corrective against the press reviews that follow, which concern themselves with the content of Sale's book rather than the style of her writing, despite her attempts to propel herself into the orbits of literary stars such as Byron and Scott.

⁹⁷ JMA, MS42729, p.93.

⁹⁸ See Appendix

Reader Reception

Scott's *Waverley* novels had, by the time of the First Anglo-Afghan War, established the conventions of the historical romance genre amongst British and colonial readers. His influence is demonstrated in works such as the novels of bestselling author, Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849), friend and correspondent of Scott, whose books were declared by John Ruskin (1819-1900) to be 'the most re-readable in existence'.⁹⁹ Her last completed novel, *Helen* (1834) was published two years after Scott's death, and a copy of this triple-decker may well have been found in the personal libraries of the British expedition to Kabul, wedged amidst the numerous luxuries transported by camels through the narrow passes. In it, she describes 'lion-hunting', a phenomenon where the company of 'celebrated people' is actively courted, and their autographs sought and displayed in scrap-books.¹⁰⁰ During a house party, the novel's characters discuss which famous person the assembled guests would most wish to meet, 'by acclamation they all named Sir Walter Scott, "The Aristo of the North"'.¹⁰¹ One who had met him reminisced on his 'chivalrous courtesy' and his 'combined talent and knowledge of the historian, novelist, antiquary, and poet' in a description considered an echo of Edgeworth's own opinions of Scott.¹⁰² This fashion for 'lion-hunting' encompassed media personalities as well as literary giants, such as Scott and Byron. It continued into the following decade, where Sale and Eyre were caught up in its enthusiastic pursuit. Kaye noted the combined power of artistic representation, dramatic narrative and celebrity status when:

⁹⁹ Maria Edgeworth, *Helen* (1834; London: Sort of Books, 2010), frontispiece. Her published writings spanned forty years and her novels influenced her rival and admirer, Jane Austen (1775-1817) as well as Scott himself.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, pp.132-3.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.135.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p.137; John Mullan, Introduction, p.viii.

for a time the chief actors furnished the print-sellers with subjects, and the Leo-Hunters with red-hot lions. Thousands of copies of the Narrative of Lieutenant Eyre, and the Journal of Lady Sale were sold in a few weeks; and against that "monster" Mahomed Akbar, young ladies lisped vengeance with their rosy lips, and old men mumbled it with their toothless gums.¹⁰³

Beyond the actual and fictional lionising of writers, there is a further connection with Scott and his literary heritage that haunts Sale's work. The poet Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) was travelling in Europe during the French Revolutionary Wars, which ran from the beginning of the nineteenth century until, after a brief peace, they segued into the Napoleonic Wars that ended at Waterloo in 1815. During his travels he saw the fighting and visited battlefields, experiences he used in his poem of the Austrian defeat at Linden in Upper Bavaria in a snowstorm so fierce that 'soldiers could only distinguish their enemies by the flash of their guns'.¹⁰⁴ Unlike Scott's unsuccessful lines on Waterloo, Campbell's 'Hohenlinden', written in 1801 and published in 1802, was one of his most famous poems. He was one of Scott's literary circle and the critic John Leyden believed that, in 'Hohenlinden', he had 'written the finest verses that have been published these fifty years'.¹⁰⁵ The final verse of this poem was the one that Sale recalled in her *Journal* as having read on the eve of the retreat from Kabul.

Few, few shall part where many meet,
The snow shall be their winding-sheet;
And every turf beneath their feet

¹⁰³ [Kaye], 'English in India', p.7.

¹⁰⁴ Introduction to "Hohenlinden", ed Rupert S. Holland, *Historic Poems and Ballads* (Philadelphia: Jacobs, 1912) <<http://www.poetry-archive.com/c/hohenlinden.html>> [accessed 11 April 2012].

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Shall be a soldier's sepulchre.¹⁰⁶

It was quoted by Sale as an evocative presentiment of the slaughter to come: the dramatic imagery of a book discarded by her son-in-law in the hasty preparations for departure, picked up casually by Sale only for it to (providentially) fall open at this poem.¹⁰⁷ In this literary allusion, which demonstrates the direct influence of Scott and Campbell on Sale, she cleverly managed to connect for her readers the unfamiliar and distant Afghan conflict with the known and recently topical continental wars that had made much of Europe a place of danger and bloodshed. It would also have been a reminder, in a text appearing after the disasters of the Afghan campaign, of British successes in the Napoleonic Wars. Her claim that 'this verse is never absent from my thoughts' (227) turned the lines into a touchstone that featured in the various narratives that followed her work.

This literary slipstreaming in the wake of famous writers did not convince the critics of the more established newspapers and magazines. *The Times* reviewed her journal according to the custom of the time, with substantial extracts rather than editorial comment, but the tone is surprisingly neutral. A book on such a subject and from such an author 'can require no commendation from us' the reviewer claimed, continuing 'it will be read by everybody, and no-one, we will venture to say, will rise disappointed from the perusal of this interesting volume'.¹⁰⁸ The book's merits rested on the issue of authenticity, of being able to depend upon its accuracy because it had not been drawn from memory. Sale's 'narrative evinces a more than common share of literary ability', but it was the author's assertion that she resisted the temptation to

¹⁰⁶ *Journal*, p.227. I note that she misquotes the first line, which Campbell has as 'Ah! few shall part...', although Scott notes in his journal that Campbell's fault is that he is 'a great corrector' and that 'many an original composition [is] corrected into mediocrity'.

¹⁰⁷ With these examples of both her mother's and her husband's reading habits, it is likely that the observation by the cantonment surgeon John Magrath, that Sale's daughter Alexandrina was 'ignorant and illiterate', was due to his own sour disposition. Dalrymple, p.267.

¹⁰⁸ *Times*, 18 April 1843.

rewrite her work that drew from *The Times* the reassurance that they could therefore 'easily excuse the absence of "fine writing" and be content with the sterling merits of this excellent and valuable work'.¹⁰⁹

When the *Athenaeum* reviewed Sale's newly published *Journal*, it declined any rigorous critical evaluation to prophesy that:

this book will travel, as fast as railroad can carry it, to the remotest corner of the three kingdoms, and no Englishman, or woman either, will pause for a moment to inquire of the critic as to its merits or its character - enough that it contains the journal of one whose very name lightens up the eye and gladdens the spirit - of one whose "story shall the good man tell his son" - the journal of our high-minded noble countrywoman, Lady Sale.¹¹⁰

The review then ended with a reminder that while not all were wholehearted in their admiration for these unofficial stories emerging from the debacle of the First Anglo-Afghan War, Sale's endorsement carried considerable weight:

As we did not hesitate to state our objections to the somewhat obtrusive, and, under the circumstances, objectionable comments by Lieut. Eyre, we think it right to acknowledge that Lady Sale fully confirms all he stated as to the infatuation, imbecility, and folly of those in authority, and which appear to have marked the whole of their proceedings, from the first taking possession of the camps and cantonments to the last hour of surrender or slaughter.

If some in Britain were uncomfortable at these published accounts, in India Kaye noted a stronger reaction:

¹⁰⁹ *Times*, 18 April 1843.

¹¹⁰ *Athenaeum*, 22 April 1843.

In England these contemporary histories were read and quoted; wept and wondered over. In India, they produced other effects – here the writers were summoned before a totally different tribunal. Their works were now to be judged by men not wholly ignorant of the event detailed in them, [...] who had been actors in the scenes described, whose doings were recorded [...] in the pages of the works now before the world. The result, as might be expected, was a considerable amount of discussion, principally carried on in the public prints [...] It is irksome to our gallantry to be compelled to add that the work which suffered most severely from this critical manipulation, was that written by the Lady.¹¹¹

Many reviews of Sale's book, both from Britain and India, were copied and repeated amongst the Anglo-Indian papers. Rivalries between titles, and between supporters of the various British participants in the war, proliferated, and were discussed, encouraged and condemned in tones of editorial hyperbole. The *Bengal Herald* reprinted an editorial from the *Bengal Hurkaru*, attacking the 'virulent epithets which the *Atlas* bales out like bilge water' (when the latter paper attacked General Shelton over and above Sale's criticism of him) and acknowledged the widespread debates upon the 'unscrupulous character of the Indian press' and accusations of 'maligning the army.'¹¹² But the reservations by some of the Anglo-Indian reading community towards Sale's *Journal* did not affect the reception of the book in Britain. By the time of its publication in book form, Sale's journal seems to have operated less as something new or literary in or of itself, than as the foundation stone or starting point for all interpretations of the events she covered: the siege of Kabul, the retreat through the passes and the captivity and eventual release of the prisoners. *The Times* review

¹¹¹ [Kaye], 'Eastern Captivity', *Calcutta Review*, 5.10 (1846), 428-482 (p.431).

¹¹² *Bengal Herald*, 24 June 1843, reprinting editorial matter from the *Bengal Hurkaru*, 21 June 1843.

noted above used it as a litmus test for the veracity of Eyre's account, and many subsequent Histories and Narratives are held up against Sale for comparison. An anonymous *History of War in Afghanistan* was deemed to have missed the tide in the affairs of the reading public: 'if it had been published a few months ago [...] would have had better sale than now'.¹¹³ By October this title was judged to have appeared 'at a time when the public is nearly tired of the subject [and] adds but little to the lurid accounts of Outram, Eyre and Lady Sale'.¹¹⁴ Even the publisher Henry Colburn uses the comparison in his advertisement for Greenwood's *Narrative of the Late Victorious Campaign in Afghanistan, under General Pollock* when it is pitched as a 'companion to the narratives of Lady Sale and Lt Eyre'.¹¹⁵ It was the contents of this last title which the *Observer* reckoned 'likely to prove most powerfully interesting to the English public [as] while almost everyone has read Sale and Eyre's sad tales of disasters, no account has hitherto appeared of the glorious success'.¹¹⁶

While the First Anglo-Afghan War was hardly a 'glorious success', the rapid sales of both Eyre's and Sale's published narratives of it were a publishing phenomenon. Both journals earned their authors similar amounts; £1,078 for Sale, £1,110 for Eyre.¹¹⁷ This figure excludes Eyre's later editions and *Sketches*, and the overseas figures for

¹¹³ *Observer*, 13 August 1843, reviewing Charles Nash (ed), *History of the War in Affghanistan, from its commencement to its close: From the journal and letters of an officer high in rank* (London: Thomas Brooks, 1843). James Outram's *Rough Notes of the Campaign in Sindh and Affghanistan in 1838-9* (London: Richardson, 1840) was, like James Atkinson's *The Expedition into Affghanistan* (London: Allen, 1842), William Taylor's *Scenes and Adventures in Affghanistan* (London: Newby, 1842), William Barr's *Journal of a March from Delhi to Peshawur, and from thence to Cabul* (London: Madden, 1844) and Isaac Allen's *Diary of a March through Sindh and Affghanistan* (London: Hatchard, 1843), eyewitness accounts of either the early part of the campaign or the later retribution. They all took advantage of readers' interest in Afghanistan to publish or reissue their narratives.

¹¹⁴ *Hampshire Advertiser*, 7 October 1843.

¹¹⁵ *Caledonian Mercury*, 21 March 1844, reviewing John Greenwood, *Narrative of the Late Victorious Campaign in Affghanistan, under General Pollock: With Recollections of Seven Year's Service in India* (London: Colburn, 1844).

¹¹⁶ *Observer*, 17 March 1844.

¹¹⁷ Using the purchasing power calculator at < <http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/> > [accessed 12 September 2013], this equates to £86,840 for Sale and £89,420 for Eyre at 2011 values, the most recent comparison available. Eyre confirmed both his earnings and the impact of his work, proudly stating in the preface to his 1869 *Retrospect of the Affghan War* that his *Operations* 'which was the means of putting £1000 in my pocket, had deprived the great Duke of Wellington of a whole night's slumber'.

either writer. Sale's work was, like Eyre's, published in America, in her case by Harper, in his by Carey & Hart; his work appears to have been published or pirated in translation in Paris and Holland, hers in Paris, Leipzig and Stuttgart.¹¹⁸

The British cultural market was not restricted to texts, and news and views of Afghanistan were not exclusively transmitted to the British public through the medium of the written word. Sale's afterlife stretched beyond the printed pages of her journal and her words and those of others, were transformed into an early Victorian cross-media series of events, catering for various levels of taste, class and price. There was an appetite for information and imagination, fed by public exhibits of artwork depicting Afghanistan, and dances and songs which encapsulated the highs and lows of public feeling about the conflict. After the captives had been released, the Anglo-Afghan War was presented on stage as popular entertainment by Astley's Circus in scenes that remained in the programme for at least six years.

In Edinburgh, a diorama exhibition opened in July 1842 showing a 'moving Panorama of the war in Affghanistan' including Robert Sale's 'glorious victory' at Jellalabad and Pollock's 'determination and energy [in] carrying of this savage defile' of the Khyber Pass.¹¹⁹ By the time these dioramas were shown in Manchester, they were a 'Novelty Extraordinary' that ran from December 1843 for three months, and references to the Khyber Pass were now freighted with the horrors of the retreat from Kabul.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Lady Sale, *A Journal of the Disasters in Affghanistan, 1841-2* (New York: Harper, 1843). French editions include: *Retraite et destruction de l'armée Anglaise dans l'Afghanistan en janvier 1842, journal du lieutenant Vt. Eyre: suivi de notes-familiales écrites pendant sa captivité chez les Afghan*, trans. Paul Jessé, (Paris: Corréard, 1844). German editions include: Lady Sale, *Tagebuch der Unfälle Afghanistan 1841-1842 von Lady Sale*, trans. Theodor Oelckers, (Leipzig: Weigel, 1843); Lady Sale, *Tagebuch über die Unfälle der Engländer in Afghanistan 1841-1842 von Lady Sale*, trans. August Zoller, (Stuttgart: Franck'scher Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1844). A footnote on page 299 of Eyre's 1879 *Insurrection* records how 'on one occasion, during his visit to Europe in 1855-56, Eyre happened to be looking over the bookshelves of a bookseller's shop in Paris, when he suddenly came upon his own work, translated into French. It is impossible to imagine a more pleasing surprise to an author than such a discovery.'

¹¹⁹ *Scotsman*, 27 July 1842.

¹²⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 9 December 1843; 24 February 1844.

Illustrations also appeared in periodicals, such as *The Lady's Blackwood's Magazine of Fashion and Literature*, a monthly magazine selling at 2s., that included articles on Lady Sale and Lady Macnaghten in their January 1843 edition, and advertised their February 1844 issue as containing 'a splendid lithographic drawing, representing the last Struggle of the British Army during the Retreat from Cabul'.¹²¹ Within the same advertisement was *The Illustrated Companion to Sale's Journal*, which at 2s. 6d. for seven plates, provided a cheaper alternative to Eyre's volume of sketches.¹²²

Music could be listened to at public recitals or, by purchase of sheet music, played at home. 'Affghanistan: Mourn for the Brave' with words and music by 'M.A.M.N.' was 'dedicated with feelings of deepest Respect and Admiration to Lady Sale and her Companions in Captivity' in 1842.¹²³ Selling at 2s., the song told of 'high souls [in] a prison beyond the deep water'. Music by the more prolific Louis A. Emanuel included 'Come, Weave the Laurel Wreath for Her!', a 'patriotic song' on the 'heroic conduct of Lady Sale' with words by Edward J. Gill, celebrating Sale's 'noble message [that] "No Surrender" should be her husband's motto', extolling the woman of whom 'no fear could daunt her soul'.¹²⁴ Selling at 2s. 6d. it was marketed as a companion to Emanuel's pianoforte piece (priced at 3s.) 'General Sale's Grand Triumphal March to Cabul', which was performed by 'the celebrated band of Jullien' at the English Opera House's promenade concerts.¹²⁵

During the retreat and subsequent captivity, Sale had been built up into an emblem of heroic resistance to the destruction of the British imperial efforts in the East. It was therefore not surprising that the release of the hostages from their imprisonment

¹²¹ *Times*, 6 January 1843; 1 February 1844.

¹²² *Times*, 1 February 1844.

¹²³ 'M.A.M.N.', 'Affghanistan: Mourn for the Brave' (London: Falkner, [?1842]).

¹²⁴ Louis A. Emanuel and E.J. Gill, 'Come, Weave the Laurel Wreath for Her!' (London: Ransford, 1843).

¹²⁵ Louis A. Emanuel, 'General Sale's Grand Triumphal March to Caboul' (London: Ransford, 1843).

should also focus so intensely upon the figure of the 'Grenadier in Petticoats'. Recorded in the letters and reports of both the captives and the soldiers who escorted them to safety, the reunion of Sale and her husband was featured as the crowning moment, full of poignancy and restrained joy. Following the lead of *The Times*, the papers wrote of the 'highly affecting' reunion, while the report in one went as far as to abdicate all journalistic endeavours: the scene 'between Sir R. Sale and his heroic wife, and widowed daughter [...] must be left to the imagination of the reader; no pen [...] could be trusted to depict the emotions excited by that blissful meeting'.¹²⁶ Another paper, noting that 'as every circumstance connected with the release of the prisoners is of deep interest', carried a report from *Bombay Times*, ending with the vague hope that the Sale's reunion 'might form the subject of a hundred pictures'.¹²⁷

Some sketches were indeed printed of this 'affecting' scene, but a different form of popular culture embraced this reunion so dramatically. As Pottinger notes:

The Victorians, who marked the first success of the Afghan War by dancing to a popular galop [*sic*] called 'The Storming of Ghuznee', applauded the rescue of the Kabul captives when it was enacted as a highlight of Astley's Circus in 1844.¹²⁸

Punch's 1844 Pocket Book reprints within its diary section an extract from 'WIDDICOMBE'S *Journal of the Astley's Affghanistan Campaign*. The light tone of the report certainly conveyed the impression that the theatrical event described was not aimed at any high moral tone or serious historical accuracy. In 'The Disasters of the Khyber [...] the cavalry were sadly harassed by the unceasing volleys of oaths from the

¹²⁶ *Observer*, 5 and 12 December 1842; *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 December 1842; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 12 December 1842.

¹²⁷ *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 15 December 1842.

¹²⁸ George Pottinger, *The Afghan Connection: the Extraordinary Adventures of Major Eldred Pottinger* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1983), p. xix.

prostrate supernumeraries who had laid down upon the sawdust to die'. The actor who played Akbar Khan offered 'a fearful example of Affghan treachery' by being 'mild and courteous' in the green room but 'savage and ferocious' on stage, and, during the staged battles, an Asiatic camp-follower 'proved to be an emissary of a Feringhee confectioner', supplying meat-pies to the actors.¹²⁹

The section entitled 'The Return of the Captives' was distilled into the much-vaunted meeting between the Sales. The escape from her captors was romanticised from her offer to carry a musket (referred to in her *Journal*) into theatrical swordplay as Punch noted in mock admiration 'the heroic manner in which she fought the double sword combat with six Affghans, whom she put to flight, drew down the loudest praise'. The review echoed the newspaper reports, commenting that the reunion itself 'is described as remarkably affecting'. This was difficult to verify as 'it was not seen by many' because it took place 'in the prompter's box' and was obscured by the ebb and flow of members of the audience who hurried past 'as there is a two-and-sixpenny fine for loitering in the first entrance'.¹³⁰ Yet in Philip Hensher's fictionalised version, the two actors playing Robert and Florentia Sale exploited the melodrama of the scene, 'waiting for the audience to start weeping', for the 'impassioned' orchestra and 'the gods [who] sang along', and for the 'furious applause' to die down before declaiming their ringing final lines of patriotism and love.¹³¹

This reunion was the highlight of the production, the part that, in Hensher's reimagining, claims that:

¹²⁹ *Punch's 1844 Pocket Book in two parts* (London: Punch, [?1844]), II.128.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, II.131.

¹³¹ Philip Hensher, *The Mulberry Empire, or Two Virtuous Journeys of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan* (London: Flamingo/Harper Collins, 2003), p.522.

in the end, in the stories, in the circuses, it will come down to this; the nurses of the West will hunch by candlelight over their wide-eyed charges and tell them the story, and this is what it will come down to, this last scene.¹³²

This was the scene that held the imagination. In 1850 *Astley's* revived 'the now old spectacle of *'The Affghanistan War, or the Revolt of Cabul, and British Triumphs'* to a 'highly popular place of amusement' within the remit of the *Northern Star* in 1850.¹³³ The proprietor's 'unique *corps dramatique* engaged in the spectacle' of the programme, upon which had been lavished 'the resources of a vast establishment' for the enjoyment of the May Day holiday visitors.¹³⁴

This glorious, raucous and bowdlerised scene seems at odds with Sale's own journal narrative. As in the newspapers, the main participant seemed herself to find it 'impossible to express our feelings on Sale's approach' (436). Unlike the flamboyant actress who would later depict her, she found 'happiness so long delayed, as to be almost unexpected, was actually painful, and accompanied by a choking sensation, which could not obtain the relief of tears' (436). True to her own blunt style of speech, it was only when she was surrounded by the infantry, the common soldiers of the 13th, who gave 'a little word of hearty congratulation [...] each in his own style' that her 'highly-wrought feelings found the desired relief' in her 'long withheld tears' (437). Her husband was equally taciturn. When congratulated on her release by a junior officer 'the gallant old man turned towards me and tried to answer, but his feelings were too strong; he made a hideous series of grimaces, dug his spurs into his horse and galloped off as hard as he could'.¹³⁵

¹³² Hensher, p.516.

¹³³ *Northern Star and National Trades' Journal*, 25 May 1850.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ MacKenzie, quoted in Patrick Macrory, *Signal Catastrophe: The Story of the Disastrous Retreat from Kabul 1842* (London: History Book Club, 1967), p.264.

Theatre impresarios and artists may be called to account for their flights of fancy. But such representations flow directly from the written narratives circulated by editors and publishers, who bear responsibility for constructing the heroic figure of Lady Sale. They may also be responsible for other matters, however unexpected. In a letter to John Murray in the week in April in which Sale's *Journal* was published, his friend Sir Francis Head wrote:

I was at a committee this morning, when I heard a gentleman say: 'My friend, Mr. Bouverie, got hold of Lady Sale's book yesterday evening and sat reading it till five o'clock this morning. In fact, he passed the night with Lady Sale instead of with his own wife'. I mention this as one of the sins for which, as a publisher, you will some of these days have to account.¹³⁶

It is an apt closing image to this chapter, reflecting back to John Murray the publishing phenomenon which he had helped create: one that saw Florentia Sale become a compelling textual heroine who 'stirred up the life-blood of every man with a bounding heart within his bosom'.¹³⁷ This blood-stirring quality ultimately defines Sale's appeal to her readers. They did not read her for carefully crafted prose or exquisite verses, but for her dash and bluster, for straight speaking in a time of rumour, and for courage amongst the military failures. Her words conveyed the immediacy of breaking news that, like most broadcasts of dramatic events, raised a quick storm of attention before just as quickly fading, showing how the popularity of the texts used to illustrate the brief rise and fall, at the start of this study, mirror closely the news coverage of the time. For Sale, the hoped for literary renown was soon replaced by the caricature figure of the 'Grenadier in Petticoats', twirling her swords on the circus stage.

¹³⁶ Sir Francis Bond Head to John Murray, 19 April 1843. RED Record 27457, Reading Experience Database <<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/>> [accessed 3 November 2010].

¹³⁷ *Atlas*, 22 April 1843.

Postscript

Thousands of theatregoers in the audience at *Astley's* or the avid readers of the newspapers, periodicals or newly published accounts were not the only enthusiastic consumers of Sale's narrative, to be studied today as distant curiosities. The latest invasion of Afghanistan, which began in 2001, has proved to be a longer engagement than the previous three Anglo-Afghan wars combined. The costs in human, monetary and geo-political terms have still to be assessed; similar miscalculations, lack of intelligence and hidden agendas have hampered the current conflict. Even with the most up-to-date of technologies and effective satellite links, this war (like those before it) continues to be a textually mediated conflict, with the press in its various forms pumping the narratives of battle around the modern communication circuits. Sale's words are still relevant in the twenty-first century. In 2009 the Tricycle Theatre in London staged a cycle of 13 plays in *The Great Game: Afghanistan* under the directorship of Nicolas Kent and Indhu Rubasingham. It toured America, then was staged again in 2010 in London before touring to Washington, New York and other American cities. The first sequence, 'Invasions and Independence 1842-1930' opens with 'Bugles at the Gate of Jalalabad' by Stephen Jeffreys, which dramatically explores the confusions and terrors of the First Anglo-Afghan War. In the bitter January night shortly after the arrival of Doctor Brydon, four soldiers stand uneasy guard at Jalalabad, sounding a bugle in the hope that the noise will guide other survivors to the safety of the fort. Interwoven with their anxious conversation, Jemma Redgrave as Sale reads verbatim from her journal, her words still speaking to us today: challenging, puncturing and ridiculing the confused motives of the soldiers and, beyond them, the authors and architects of the campaign Sale regarded as the disasters in Afghanistan. Across the span of 170 years, this remarkable woman again questions the injustice and folly of

British foreign policy and prophesies with uncanny accuracy that 'Affghanistan will become a byword amongst the nations'.¹³⁸

From the single, strong voice of Sale's *Journal*, competing with her fellow captives to be the credible narrator of the British experience in Afghanistan, the next chapter considers how these and other individual accounts were crafted into a single, multi-sourced official version of the war. My study of Kaye investigates the extent to which literary abilities and publishing contacts outweigh direct experience of the subject, in the journey from memoir to history. With access to copious source material and a receptive audience, what financially stretched writer could ignore the opportunity that Afghanistan presented?

¹³⁸ *Journal*, p.401.

The Authorised Version: John Kaye's History

With Afghanistan proving a highly popular and lucrative topic through the narratives of those involved in the First Anglo-Afghan War, other writers who lacked first-hand experience nevertheless used their literary skills to comment upon and rework the war into different genres. This chapter charts the development of one writer from anonymous, critical articles in a Calcutta periodical, through fictional representation in his novel, to his respected, authoritative history of the war, based on privileged access to a variety of official and private sources. His choice of themes and the contemporary responses to his work demonstrate that whilst intense public interest in the Sale phenomenon faded within a few years, Afghanistan continued to be a popular subject of historical and political debate in the decades after the war.

John William Kaye (1814-1876) was a prolific essayist and author. Over 50 of the anonymous contributions to *Calcutta Review* [hereafter *CR*] during the 1840s and 50s, have been attributed to him and he wrote for a number of other journals and newspapers in India and Britain. Here, the most significant of his five early novels is the last, *Long Engagements: A Tale of the Affghan Rebellion* [hereafter *Engagements*], published in 1846.¹ He wrote and edited a dozen titles covering history and biography, focussing on the lives and correspondence of notable officers of the East India Company, including a major account of the First Anglo-Afghan War, *History of the War*

¹ *Jerningham: or The Inconstant Man* (London: Smith, Elder, 1836); *Doveton: or the Man of Many Impulses* (London: Smith, Elder, 1837); *The Story of Basil Bouverie* (Calcutta: privately printed by S. Smith, 1842); *Peregrine Pultuney: or, Life in India* (London: Mortimer, 1844); *Long Engagements: A Tale of the Affghan Rebellion* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1846).

in *Afghanistan* [hereafter *History*], first published in 1851, and the Indian 'Mutiny' in *A History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857-1858*.²

A Preface - Setting the Scene

Kaye was born in London in 1814 into a comfortable middle-class family. As son and grandson of solicitors to the Bank of England, he was destined for politics. However, he had to leave Eton earlier than expected due to the family's sudden financial reverses, and through a personal favour to his grandfather from a director of the East India Company, was nominated for a cadetship. The reaction of his mother to the news may have been the source of a scene in his early fiction, where the hero's mother has a fit of the vapours when hearing that her son was bound for India: 'India! only think, Mr Pultuney, of the climate, the fevers, the liver complaints, the jungles, and the Black Hole of Calcutta'.³ It was a country which 'in her mind, was a sort of colonized Pandæmonium, and nothing could divest her of an opinion that she might as well apprentice her son to a chimney-sweeper as to the United Company of East India Merchants'.⁴

His time at Addiscombe, the training college for the East India Company, prepared him for life as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Bengal Artillery. It also provided him with useful copy for his future writings, for, as Douglas Peers notes, in *Peregrine Pultuney* 'its hero experiences a childhood that mirrors that of Kaye'.⁵ Kaye wrote about the college for *CR*, filling five pages of the journal with extracts from the novel, which

² *History of the War in Afghanistan: From the Unpublished Letters and Journals of Political and Military Officers employed in Afghanistan throughout the Entire Period of British Connexion with that Country*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1851); *A History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857-1858* (London: Allen, 1864), completed after his death as *Kaye's and Malleeson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*, ed. by Colonel Malleeson, (London: Allen, 1888-93).

³ *Peregrine Pultuney*, 1.4.

⁴ *Ibid*, 1.11.

⁵ Douglas Peers, "'There is Nothing More Poetical than War': Romanticism, Orientalism, and Militarism in J.W. Kaye's Narratives of the Conquest of India', in *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British and Colonial Press*, ed. by Julie F. Codell (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), pp.273-299 (p.298).

he claimed had 'the merit [...] of fidelity'.⁶ He arrived in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1833 to begin his military career, but the 'baneful climate' contributed to his persistent ill health and he resigned from the army in 1841, as the situation in distant Kabul was deteriorating.⁷

A Beginning - the Calcutta Review

With a family to support, Kaye now exploited the literary talents he had shown since his first contribution had been printed in his school journal. He became a Man of Letters, writing, editing and publishing amidst the richly bookish climate of the thriving capital city of Calcutta. The timing and geographic location of his new career allowed him to develop into an influential writer, who significantly contributed to literary representations of Afghanistan.

The capital of British India, Calcutta was a major trading and administrative centre, of greater importance than Bombay (now Mumbai) or Madras (now Chennai), which benefitted from the introduction of steam ships and the resulting faster transport links to Britain. As Kaye himself wrote, along with the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1833 'under which the country was thrown open to adventurers of every class', the greatly increased traffic of passengers and letters between England and India gave 'a proportionate impetus to the local press; still further multiplied the sources of information thus thrown open to the mother country'.⁸ News from England, gleaned from official sources and private letters, was issued in digest form in the numerous journals and newspapers in the cities and towns of British India, and in return 'the number of letters, despatched every month [to Britain] by the Bombay steamers,

⁶ [Kaye] 'Addiscombe', *CR*, 2.3 (1844), 121-151 (p.124).

⁷ [Kaye] 'Sick Room in India', *CR*, 3.5 (1845), 71-101 (p.71).

⁸ 'English in India', p.2.

exceeds thirty thousand; the number of printed papers ten thousand'.⁹ A letter could be delivered to London within five weeks, with an answer received in two months and this 'regular Steam Communication' had the effect of making 'every Englishman and Englishwoman, in the three presidencies, a periodical letter-writer'.¹⁰

Kaye himself contributed to a number of journals. The *Calcutta Literary Gazette* printed his first contribution 'The Essayist' in 1834, and also his novel *Peregrine Pultuney* a few years before it appeared in book form, with the London publisher John Mortimer. In 1838 the *Calcutta Monthly Journal* praised him for his essays, which 'abound in just and striking thoughts, and the illustrations, which are very copious, indicate extensive reading, and are, in general, in very good taste'.¹¹ He joined the staff of the *Bengal Hurkaru* on leaving the army and was later appointed editor. Through his contacts he was able to establish the *Calcutta Review* [hereafter *CR*], aimed at the literary readership that otherwise relied on the imported journals such as the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review*. Published quarterly, Kaye intended from the start that its distribution should stretch beyond Calcutta where it was printed 'into circulation in England and thence in Paris'.¹²

For the breadth of its aims to inform and influence Anglo-Indian life, *CR* was held in high regard. The press in India and Britain considered it from the start, as in 1856 after fifty issues, as 'the most reliable authority on all Indian subjects'.¹³ Extracts and articles were reprinted in other journals in the common practice of syndication of news reports in India, spreading Kaye's influence with the security that the 'particulars may be relied upon' as they were derived:

⁹ 'English in India', p.3.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.3.

¹¹ *Calcutta Monthly Journal* (May 1838), p.44, quoted in Nihar Nandan Singh, *British Historiography on British Rule in India: The Life and Writings of Sir John William Kaye 1814-1876* (New Delhi: Janaki Prakashan, 1986), p.8.

¹² Kaye to Henry Lawrence, 2 September 1844, quoted in Singh, p.21.

¹³ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 3 June 1856, p.339.

from the *Calcutta Review*, a periodical which, though it has only reached its seventh number, already contains a greater mass of information relative to the history, the geography, the statistics, the politics, the literature, the religion, &c., of India and the neighbouring countries, than any single work with which we are acquainted.¹⁴

Kaye's ambition was to influence governmental policies on India (according to Singh) and satisfy European readers in India (according to Peers).¹⁵ He showed less interest in gazing downwards into the 'harmless [...] dark recesses of native life', graphically described in the advertisement of the first issue of his *CR*, than in reaching upwards to the 'high places - among the ruling body' where power, patronage and - according to Kaye - ignorance resided.¹⁶ In the controversies that followed the First Anglo-Afghan War, Kaye was to find much ignorance, mendacity and downright obfuscation, as his writings supplied the ammunition of argument against some of the British and Indian governments' heaviest bureaucracy.

Within a year of his resigning from the army, the debacle of the Retreat from Kabul was filling the pages of the newspapers. It was a lucrative theme for those who could respond to the phenomenal public interest in Afghanistan with rapid journalism and reliable reporting of the 'vivid and exciting scenes of picturesque warfare', which read like 'some highly wrought narrative of fictitious adventure'.¹⁷ Working on the *Hurkaru* as the conflict unfolded, he had to deal with the demands of a daily newspaper, processing random bits of incoming information into a coherent narrative for his readers. It was a time when every scrap of news 'was anticipated with painful anxiety'

¹⁴ *Standard*, 3 January 1846.

¹⁵ Singh, p.21; Douglas Peers, "'Those Noble Exemplars of the True Military Tradition': Constructions of the Indian Army in the Mid-Victorian Press', *Modern Asian Studies*, 31.1 (February 1997), 109-142 (p.1014).

¹⁶ [Kaye], Advertisement, *CR*, 1.1 (1844), n.p.

¹⁷ 'English in India', p.4.

in India and Britain.¹⁸ Kaye later reflected that, during that period of uncertainty, every article he wrote touching on Afghanistan had a ready audience primed with 'such intense eagerness to catch the first sound of each coming rumour, as the sad tidings of disaster after disaster welled in from the north-west'.¹⁹ In his articles and fiction about this time, he describes how the war was a constant theme of conversation amongst Anglo-Indians, with the search for news of friends and family stationed at Kabul a constant pressure in their daily lives.

Whilst still unresolved, the conflict found its way into his fiction. His fourth novel, *The Story of Basil Bouverie*, features the 'dreadful Major Matchlock [...] with his eternal prose about the Army of the Indus', worrying about Beloochees, Candahar and Ghuznee, as a leitmotif throughout the story.²⁰ In England every source of information was raided, including the 'forced-meat balls of Affghan history and geography' and when Eyre and Sale's first-hand accounts were published, 'thousands of copies [...] were sold in a few weeks'.²¹ Kaye noted that even Astley's Circus (see previous chapter) played its part in the spread of information, albeit with slight concern for accuracy. The 'view of war' put forward at the 'Amphi-theatre [...] bore as close a resemblance to the actual drama, as the domestic tragedy of Punch and Judy'.²² The connection of this war with circuses and puppetry is a powerful demonstration of how quickly the conflict, and Sale's account of it in particular, was assimilated into British popular culture.

From writing at least four of the six articles in the first edition of *CR* in 1844, Kaye continued to be a contributor after he returned to Britain. He stepped down as editor after the first four issues but remained proprietor until the end of 1855. Taking

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.6.

¹⁹ 'The Administration of Lord Ellenborough', p.508.

²⁰ [Kaye], *The Story of Basil Bouverie*, 3 vols (Calcutta: Smith, 1842), 1.25. (See below for discussion on the order in which his novels were published).

²¹ 'English in India', p.7.

²² *Ibid*, p.7.

into account attribution discrepancies, until he handed over to George Smith the editor of *Friend of India*, he contributed up to 47 articles for most of the 50 issues of the journal, on subjects ranging from military history and biography, to ancient Indian culture and current parliamentary debates.²³ Excluding an uncharacteristic article on steamship communication from Europe to Australia of disputed attribution, his own contributions followed the journal's initial prospectus, to provide 'truthful expositions of some of the principal questions affecting the interests of the people of British India'.²⁴

At the age of 31 Kaye left India with his wife and children on 'The Earl of Hardwicke', calling at the Cape of Good Hope. This departure was recorded in the *Friend of India* on 27 February 1845. Later in the year the same paper wrote the 'happy' news 'that Mr Kaye, the late Editor of the *Bengal Hurkaru*, has reached England in improved health'.²⁵ Kaye had caricatured British perceptions of the Anglo-Indian as being 'very rich - very yellow - and very ill-tempered; [...] and that he left England young, healthy and poor, and came back old, decrepit, and rich'.²⁶ He may have returned home 'decrepit', but he was neither old nor rich, and he continued to use and reuse his experience, knowledge and imagination in various literary outlets in both England and India.

²³ *Classified Subject Index to Calcutta Review 1844-1920*, eds. by Gita Chattopadhyay, Minati Chackraborty and others (Calcutta: India Book Exchange, 1974) [hereafter *CSI*] claims that he wrote 47 articles, Singh lists 27 in her bibliography of Kaye. Krishna Sen and Debapriya Paul's 'Archival Press Project: "The Calcutta Review"' *Victorian Periodicals Review* 37.2 (Summer 2004), 233-247 covers the earlier issues to 9.17 (1848), an outcome from the Calcutta Review (Documentation Project) 2002-7, the data has been compiled in two papers:- Debapriya Paul and Sanghamitra Dalal, 'Documentation of the Articles published in the *Calcutta Review*', vols 1-9, University of Calcutta, Department of English Language and Literature website <<http://www.caluniv.ac.in/academic/English/Calcutta%20Review%20-%20Final%20Revision%2031.12.2003.pdf>> and Suchandra Dasgupta, and Chandosi Sanyal, 'Documentation of the Articles published in the *Calcutta Review*', vols 10-29, University of Calcutta, Department of English Language and Literature website <<http://www.caluniv.ac.in/academic/English/Calcutta%20Review%201848-50,1857.pdf>> [accessed 29 October 2012]. These various studies do not agree over attributions, but taking into account their views and internal evidence within the articles, I attribute 'Poetry of Recent Indian Warfare' in *CR*, 11.21 (1848) to Kaye and agree with Peers (2003), p.274 that Kaye reviewed his own *History* in *CR*, 15.30 (1851).

²⁴ Advertisement, n.p.

²⁵ *Friend of India*, 21 August 1845.

²⁶ 'English in India', p.1.

As discussed in the previous chapter, there had been no shortage of narratives concerning the first Anglo-Afghan War. Before the Army of Retribution or the rescued captives had returned home, books containing their letters and diaries were being eagerly read in India and Britain. Those 'thousands of copies of the "Narrative" of Lieutenant Eyre, and the "Journal" of Lady Sale [that] were sold in a few weeks' show Kaye's clear knowledge of the heated market for narratives of the war.²⁷ The Afghan War was a popular theme for both British and Anglo-Indian readers, many of whom were related to, or knew, those involved. Whilst the conflict and captivity continued, 'every little scrap of information [or] uncertain rumour [...] was greedily devoured, hastily disseminated, and everywhere most volubly discussed'.²⁸ Categorising the captivity narratives as 'contemporary histories', and with especial reference to Sale and Eyre's 'green and red octavos', Kaye noted that whilst in Britain these 'were read and quoted; wept and wondered over', in India, especially amongst participants in the war, they were more critically judged.²⁹ In the previous chapter I demonstrated the unquestioning acceptance of their narratives in the British press, which contrasted to the partisan and quarrelsome responses amongst the Anglo-Indian papers. In India, although 'few works have ever excited a more lively interest [or] been more extensively circulated', the accuracy of the authors' descriptions and the justice of their opinions were challenged, and they suffered some 'critical manipulation [and were] severely handled by [...] knowing critics who [...] ventured [...] sometimes not very courteously, to set the historians right'.³⁰

Kaye's grounding was in journalism, where he learnt to be as sensitive to the nuances of public opinion as to the presentation of events, and his knowledge of and contacts within the Anglo-Indian community gave him opportunities to develop his

²⁷ 'English in India', p.7.

²⁸ 'Eastern Captivity', p.429.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.432.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

voice as an authority on Indian affairs and commentator on the recent Anglo-Afghan war. His periodical articles were necessarily short, pointed and topical. Writing a novel whose entire plot centres on the events of the war, enabled him to present his readers with a rich mix of imagination and memoir. Kaye's dramatic narrative of the Kabul siege and disastrous retreat in *Engagements* represents a powerful literary portrait of Afghanistan in this acknowledged first fictional treatment of the war.

A Middle - Long Engagements

Engagements was Kaye's fifth and final full-length work of fiction. From his schoolboy jottings and his early self-published *Poems and Fragments*, his career as a novelist ended soon after his return to England in 1845, as he concentrated on his writings for journals and on the more respected work of historian and biographer. In an article for the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1861, he wrote of a response to his first full-length novel. A publisher's literary adviser 'pronounced upon it a verdict singularly adverse, not to say altogether crushing', complaining amongst other faults of the inconsistencies in character and actions of the hero.³¹ Nevertheless, Kaye published it at his own risk with Smith, Elder, even incorporating the reader's judgement into the title. *Jerningham: or The Inconstant Man* appeared in 1836 and the author, looking back over a lifetime of literary experience, noted ruefully that 'as it had scarcely anything that a novel ought to have, and almost everything a novel ought not, it is a mere matter of course that it failed'.³²

Three 'triple-decker' novels followed: *Doveton: or The Man of Many Impulses* (1837), *The Story of Basil Bouverie* (1842) and *Peregrine Pultuney: or Life in India* (1844). This dating is somewhat complicated by the fact that, although all were

³¹ Kaye, *Essays of an Optimist* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1871) [Hereafter *Optimist*], p.107.

³² *Optimist*, p.108.

published as by 'Anon', *Basil Bouverie* was credited as 'by the Author of *Peregrine Pultuney*'. Peers resolves this by noting that the latter title had appeared earlier in the *Calcutta Literary Gazette*: as with most of Kaye's novels, either whole or serialised in parts, had first been published in various journals or magazines.³³

Chronologically, his novels progress towards India. *Jerningham* and *Doveton* are set in England, although the hero of the former was born in India. *Peregrine Pultuney* has the hero follow Kaye's path to military life in Calcutta where *Basil Bouverie* is also based. This latter story bears more than a passing fancy to the plot of *The Surgeon's Daughter* (1827) by Kaye's literary idol, Sir Walter Scott. A duplicitous villain, a pregnant ingénue and a rapacious native provide the melodramatic cast against which the hero's character is tested.

Kaye's final novel, *Engagements*, was published by Chapman and Hall in early 1846, less than a year after Kaye's arrival in London. Printed as a single octavo volume of 320 pages and selling for 7 shillings, it is compact in both format and narrative drive, focussed and vivid in its portrayal of events in Kabul and their effect on the British in Calcutta, perfectly formed in its fictional treatment of actual events to offer the Anglo-Afghan War as literary entertainment. Balfour, a thoughtful administrator who would rather read the latest article by Macaulay in the *Edinburgh Review* than enter the social whirl of Calcutta, awaits the arrival from England of his two sisters. The older, the beautiful Adela, as shallow and as brittle as her looking glass is engaged to Carrington, an officer besieged in Kabul. The story switches dramatically between the besieged garrison in Afghanistan and the desperate but misguided efforts in Calcutta to keep Adela in ignorance of the horrors of her fiancé's situation. The farcical game of keeping the truth from her, when 'on the course, at the dinner-table, in the ball-room ...

³³ Peers, (2003), p.273.

everywhere people are asking "What is the news from Affghanistan?", contained added poignancy as, unaware of the reasons why her betrothed is not there to dance attendance on her, Adela's affections are drawn to the eligible bachelors who surround her.³⁴

Writing of events so well-known through the letters and journals of the participants and so fresh in the public memory, did not leave Kaye much room for innovation, but he managed a small narrative disruption which heightened the dramatic effect. In a striking prolepsis which takes place before the retelling of the disastrous retreat - with a detailed account of the journey through the passes for which Kaye borrowed heavily from Sale and Eyre - Adela has already discovered the outcome by reading in a newspaper casually discarded by her latest lover:

that the Caubul army had been annihilated - cut off almost to a man; but one solitary straggler had arrived to tell the tale of unparalleled woe to the garrison of Jullalabad. It was believed that all had perished - all save one man; that the knives of the Affghans and the cruel snow had destroyed our people by thousands.³⁵

Through the extensive coverage of events in the newspapers, readers of *Engagements* already knew of Doctor Brydon and his arrival at Jalalabad, but they also knew of the survival of some hundred captives held hostage for months afterwards. Thus Kaye increases the narrative tension, by withholding news of Carrington's death for sixty pages. This allows a sharp contrast as one chapter ended when Carrington's throat was slit and his 'life-blood [...] spirted' out, and on the next page the new chapter opens with Adela rising from her sick bed 'a new being [...] with a new heart'.³⁶ In a conventional trope from contemporary fiction, Kaye shows that the fever was as much a

³⁴ *Engagements*, p.76.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.249. Kaye uses a similar prolepsis in his *History*, as Doctor Brydon's arrival at Jalalabad immediately precedes the chapter recounting the retreat from Kabul, (1851), II.217-8.

³⁶ *Ibid*, pp.307, 308.

symptom of her moral sickness as of the emotional shock. Once it had passed, she found Christian redemption as much through this symbolic shedding of blood as through her new devotion to charitable works.

Given the enthusiasm for the narratives traced in the previous chapter, *Engagements* benefitted from the novelty of being 'the first work of fiction founded on the late disastrous war in Affghanistan'.³⁷ The novel contained 'the tone and manners of society in Anglo-India [...] most strikingly painted' but given the appetite of British readers for narratives of the war, it was the disaster and bloodshed which drew the attention, 'described with intense power and terrific effect'.³⁸ This dramatic scenario, the destruction of the army during the Retreat, set *Engagements* apart from other novels of Anglo-India, giving it an immediate link to the words of Sale and Eyre.

An article of 1846 in *CR* on 'English Literature in India' devoted fifteen of its eighteen pages to a review of *Engagements*.³⁹ Recent scholarship identifies its author as Kaye himself.⁴⁰ Despite noticeably lacking the sharp humour of Kaye's other writings, this attribution seems plausible to me. It is a rather dull and sanctimonious sermon, critical of the form of the book, of which the reviewer complains that the 'evil' of long engagements 'might be better illustrated in a series of tales, than in a single *novelte*'.⁴¹ While Kaye had elsewhere anonymously reviewed his own work, he had not elsewhere complained that his own writings contained 'something we think faulty in design'.⁴² In the single instance Peers notes when 'anonymity allowed him to review one of his own works', Kaye prefaced extensive extracts from his *History* with the comment that there

³⁷ *Essex Standard*, 2 January 1846.

³⁸ *Hampshire Advertiser*, 14 February 1846.

³⁹ [Kaye], 'English Literature in India', *CR*, 5.9 (1846), 202-220.

⁴⁰ *CSI*, entry no.1850; Singh, p.279; Sen and Paul, p.240.

⁴¹ 'English Literature in India', p.211.

⁴² *Ibid*, p.211.

are 'obvious reasons' why the anonymous reviewer could pronounce on the merits or demerits of the work.⁴³

CR considered that *Engagements* was written principally to show that there was 'little real difference between society in India and society in England [as] we are very little out of the way; only six weeks behind our brothers and cousins in London, or Bath'.⁴⁴ The reviewer concentrated on the strain suffered by engaged or married couples due to the separations of military life, but expressed dismay that Kaye should have been so unfair as to describe 'the decay of love in the breast - *of a lady*'.⁴⁵ The depths of Kaye's opposition to such 'long engagements' may be suspect, as, like many commentators in numerous articles, he placed a considerable portion of blame for the chaos of the Retreat on the presence of British wives and children as well as Indian camp followers in Kabul. The 'long engagements' of Britain's presence in Afghanistan, a policy that Kaye had railed against as 'an unrighteous usurpation', may also be a theme. It is possible to read the vacuous Adela as a type-casting, if not of the young Queen Victoria, at least of the ignorant, blinkered British public, beguiled by their leaders and deaf to the warnings of wiser voices. Of the twin settings of Calcutta and 'the wild terrors of that fearful Retreat through the Kabul passes', the reviewer acknowledged the public appetites whetted by narratives of the recent war in that 'the chapters containing an account of the latter will enjoy the greater share of popularity'.⁴⁶ As for the form of the work as a vehicle to popularise India, the novel was likely to appeal to 'a large circle of readers' and was 'more efficacious than the dissertations of a

⁴³ Peers (2003), p.274; [Kaye] 'Kaye's War in Afghanistan', *CR*, 15.30 (1851), 423-455 (p.423).

⁴⁴ 'English Literature in India', p.207.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.211.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.211.

more elaborate character, which have cost the writer an infinity of labour - of labour not appreciated by the multitude'.⁴⁷

Those public appetites for the Afghan conflict were fed, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, with a wide variety of morsels, literary, pictorial and theatrical as accounts were published, paintings of the towering passes were displayed and Astley's Circus played to full houses. The commercial value of such works naturally encouraged opportunism amongst the many who followed the initial publishing phenomenon of Eyre's and Sale's narratives. This did not automatically result in a degrading of the narrative forms to the 'Punch and Judy' antics of Astley's Circus; it also filtered upwards to the higher status literary genre of poetry. In his 1848 *CR* article 'Poetry of Recent Indian Warfare', commenting (often with some asperity) on selected works from the past five years, Kaye initiated an intriguing conversation between the work of the poets reviewed and his fiction.⁴⁸ This points towards the significance of Afghanistan - particularly of those narratives written by the captives - in the literary cultures of Britain and, through the two-way flow of books, reviews and journalism, Anglo-India. In London, the Honourable Mrs Caroline Norton (1808-1877), granddaughter of the poet, playwright and politician Richard Brinsley Sheridan, published an illustrated poem entitled *Child of the Islands* in 1845.⁴⁹ The second edition of this very political work appeared alongside Kaye's *Engagements* in Chapman and Hall's advertisements in the *Examiner*.⁵⁰ Norton's lengthy and wide-ranging poem, which *CR* considered 'a privilege and a pleasure to quote', includes four stanzas on the retreat from Kabul, with endnotes crediting Sale and Eyre as the source material.⁵¹ Her first two verses are used by Kaye in *Engagements* at the headings of Chapters XVIII and XIX (both called 'The

⁴⁷ 'English Literature in India', p.219.

⁴⁸ [Kaye], 'Poetry of Recent Indian Warfare', *CR*, 11:21 (1849), 220-256.

⁴⁹ Caroline Norton, *The Child of the Islands*, 2nd ed. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1846). Dedicated to her brother, also named Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

⁵⁰ *Examiner*, 7 February 1846.

⁵¹ 'Poetry of Recent Indian Warfare', p.235-6.

Dreadful Snow'), which follow Chapter XVII 'The Last Night at Caubul', itself headed by those famous lines from Campbell's 'Hohenlinden'. Norton's envisioning of the retreat, overlaying the vista of the snow-covered English country churchyard before her, clearly demonstrates Sale's dominating influence on how readers imagined Afghanistan. The captives were explicitly referred to in Norton's third verse, as:

Theirs was the Dreadful Snow, - who left behind
Brothers and husbands, foully, fiercely slain:
Who, led by traitors, wandered on, half blind
With bitter tears of sorrow, shed in vain,
Crossing the steep ascent, or dreary plain;
Mothers of helpless children, - delicate wives,
Who brought forth wailing infants, born in pain,
Amid a crowded wreck of human lives,
And scenes that chill the soul, though vital strength survives.⁵²

The endnotes for this verse give three full pages of extracts from Sale's *Journal*, including the key discovery of Campbell's *Poems* fallen open at 'Hohenlinden' and the central stanza beginning 'Few, few shall part...'. Norton's detailed referencing of her source of inspiration emphasises the deep impact of Sale's account on British literary imaginations. Norton did not need to explain Sale or her book, but simply copy out the 'graphic detail' that informed her verse.⁵³

In a display of his own literary credentials and aspirations, Kaye worked Norton's verses into his novel as a scene-setting device, encouraging the reader to see 'in that white sheet plashed with human gore / The dread familiar look of some brave

⁵² Norton, p.145.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p.224.

face'.⁵⁴ Further demonstrating the reflexive nature of this thread of literary influence, Kaye's review also discussed the Cambridge poet Leitch Ritchie. Ritchie based his 'The Last Toast at Kabul' on a chapter title and line credited from Kaye's novel, exhorting his doomed characters to "Drink to the hearts that beat for us!" 'Twas thus the soldier cried. / And struggling lights and shades the while passed o'er his brow of pride'.⁵⁵ Ritchie had grasped the melodramatic literary potential, if not the exact words, of Carrington's toast in *Engagements*, to 'the gentle hearts that beat for us'.⁵⁶

The place of poetry in *Engagements* as framing epigrams at the start of each chapter was a literary convention that allowed Kaye to develop his themes. It also attempted to present the First Anglo-Afghan War in a domesticated and familiar form for his readership. The unclouded tone of the verses from Tennyson, Shelley, Wordsworth and Browning in the first half of the book darkens as the events in Kabul unfold. In the second half, quotations from Shakespeare connect the text to the twisted Richard III and the murderous Macbeth, and Norton's verses describe the fatal passes 'where thoughts of unforgotten horror brood'.⁵⁷ The direct borrowing from Sale's *Journal*, those lines from 'Hohenlinden', appear at the point in the narrative where Sale read the poem during the preparations for departure, claiming the richly melodramatic effect of the verse beginning 'Few, few shall part ...'.⁵⁸ Kaye took full advantage of the poetical repetition of these opening words. His own haunting echo uses the phrase 'back, back' numerous times in this chapter's first two pages. This draws the reader's attention not only to the change of scene, the abrupt shift from Calcutta to Kabul, but to the fractured chronology, going back in time to before the deaths read about by Adela in the newspaper in Chapter XVI, 'Cast Down'. There is an additional chilling message, as

⁵⁴ *Engagements*, p.283.

⁵⁵ 'Poetry of Recent Indian Warfare', pp.235.

⁵⁶ *Engagements*, pp.127-8.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.269.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.255; *Journal*, p.227.

the omniscient narrator appears to try to break through the narrative confines of the page to avert historical events and warn the doomed army that it was 'death to go forth into the dreadful snow'.⁵⁹

An indirect reference to Sale's text concerns the wounds sustained by Walsingham, a fellow officer. Where Sturt 'had been stabbed deeply in the shoulder [...] and on the face (the latter wound striking on the bone just missing the temple)', Walsingham's shoulder suffered the 'terrible effect' of an Afghan sabre 'cutting through flesh and muscle to the bone; whilst another blow had laid open [his] right temple, the wound slanting down across the cheek-bone and narrowly avoiding the corner of the eye'.⁶⁰ Fortunately for the purposes of the story, Walsingham did not suffer Sturt's paralysis of the tongue and, while Sale could emphasise the pathos and womanly nursing skills of the sickroom, Kaye wrote a lengthy scene of dialogue revealing the wounded officer's concern with courageous behaviour and military honours.

This entwining of memoir with fiction gave the novel a useful foundation. Non-realistic literary touches familiar to readers of novels help to make shocking events that cut across everyday life with such violence comprehensible. *Engagements* was Kaye's last published work of fiction, but his use of a strong narrative arc served him well as he grappled with the numerous pages of letters, journals and official correspondence which formed the basis of his *History*.

An End - History of the War in Afghanistan

In his dealings with publisher Richard Bentley it was clear that Kaye was seeking to raise his literary status. His previous works had been journalistic essays, editorial comments and fiction: now he moved into the serious territory of historian and

⁵⁹ *Engagements*, p.256.

⁶⁰ *Journal*, p.33; *Engagements*, p.139.

biographer. On 6 January 1851 he signed a contract with Bentley, amended from its original date of 29 November 1850. The *History of the late War in Afghanistan*, as it was then titled, was to be in two volumes, each of 500-550 pages and 'similar in size to the printed page used in Macaulay's History of England lately published by Messrs Longman', placing it in the powerful slipstream of one of the most popular historical works of Victorian times.⁶¹ There was then no definitive history of the Anglo-Afghan War, and Kaye, with his abilities and contacts, was determined to take advantage of the lucrative reward this work could produce.

In contrast to previous accounts reliant upon a single source or a more limited reading of available material, Kaye's emphasis was on the access to 'original letters, and memoranda written by distinguished officers engaged in the war, and other documents hitherto unpublished'.⁶² Kaye had been given unprecedented access to the written records of those involved in the action or decisions crucial to the conduct of the war. In the advertisement for the work, Bentley assured the reading public that 'all these letters, journals, correspondence and diaries will now for the first time be given to the public'.⁶³ Here was the narrative strength of a single text, crafted out of a multiplicity of sources, and authenticated by the variety and provenance of the documents. The reviewers in Britain trembled in anticipation of a work full of 'revelations now for the first time to be made [which] are calculated to arrest the attention of the most desultory reader'.⁶⁴ It was access to these papers, many of which had been actively suppressed by the government, which would 'give this work an enduring value'.⁶⁵

Kaye took pains to encourage this confidence in his sources. In his anonymous review in *CR*, he claimed that the 'chief value of the work resides in its undoubted

⁶¹ BL, Bentley Archives, Agreement Memoranda, 46615, f.297. [Hereafter BtA].

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Morning Post*, 29 September 1851.

⁶⁴ *Standard*, 23 October 1851.

⁶⁵ *Morning Post*, 23 October 1851.

authenticity. Almost every assertion is supported by authority, quoted either in the text, the margin, or the appendix; and the authorities so quoted are mostly original authorities'.⁶⁶ In keeping with the rigours of Macaulayan historiography, he showed careful respect for these authorities who were, after all, his witnesses to the events in which he (in contrast to Sale and Eyre) took no part. He included apparently conflicting testimonies, evidence of officially denied internal disagreements, and reports intentionally omitted from parliamentary scrutiny.

In his self-deprecating preface, he claimed to have no particular qualifications for the task, beyond the 'confidence of some of the chief actors [or] their surviving relatives and friends' which had 'placed at my disposal a number of very interesting and important letters and papers'.⁶⁷ With phrases that gave the impression of hesitancy and caution, he admitted to 'walking, as it were, with a torch in my hand over a floor strewn thickly with gunpowder. There is the chance of an explosion at every step. I have been treading all along on dangerous ground'.⁶⁸

The dangerous ground across which Kaye marched his *History* was his analysis of the characters and culpabilities of the British political and military leaders in Kabul. Here I concentrate on a short section of 50 pages of his text, at a central point in both the pagination (just over halfway through the second volume of the three volume edition) and the narrative (the days leading up to the retreat), within which he addressed the failings of the Envoy Macnaghten, General Elphinstone and the military second-in-command Brigadier Shelton. As a panegyrist for the East India Company, Kaye naturally supported its reliance upon a visible military presence, which depended for credibility as much upon the impression of overwhelming strength as the reality. In India it was 'the Indian's conviction of British omnipotence' which facilitated British

⁶⁶ 'Kaye's War in Afghanistan', p.455.

⁶⁷ *History*, (1851), I, p.v.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, I, p.vi.

control, so it was important that he placed this humiliating defeat into context.⁶⁹ He believed in the general tenets of Whig history, where the past is explained within the inevitable flow towards progress and enlightenment, yet here was a recent and devastating setback. His biographies of famous East India Company men demonstrated his desire to create heroes of 'those noble exemplars of the true military tradition' to replace the generation who fought at Waterloo.⁷⁰ These were, according to Peers, based upon the historical romances of Scott, yet in writing of the events in Kabul, Kaye was forced to contrast the heroism of some in the lower ranks with the human faults and failings of their leaders.⁷¹

Kaye claimed to have found it difficult to assess the character of the Envoy Macnaghten from the 'very conflicting accounts [that] have been rendered'.⁷² Rather than an outright liar, he considered Macnaghten to be a man determined to believe what he wished to be true, particularly regarding Shah Sujah's popularity and the tranquillity of the country: to do otherwise would have been to admit the failure of the policy he himself had recommended. In the deteriorating conditions in Kabul, the Envoy did the best he could 'with a perfidious enemy before him, a decrepit general at his side, and a paralysed army at his back'.⁷³

On his criticism of General Elphinstone, Kaye admitted that he wished 'it were not more difficult to acquit the military chiefs'.⁷⁴ Brigadier Shelton was condemned for 'his perverseness, his arrogance, his contumacy' but as second-in-command it was neither his entire responsibility nor his nature 'to supply the deficiencies' of his chief.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Douglas Peers 'Soldiers, Scholars, and the Scottish Enlightenment: Militarism in Early Nineteenth-Century India', *International History Review*, 16.3 (August 1994), pp.441-465 (p.460).

⁷⁰ [Kaye] 'The Romance of India Warfare', *North British Review*, 12:23 (1849/50), pp.193-224 (p.222).

⁷¹ Peers, (1994), p.447.

⁷² *History*, (1851), II.155.

⁷³ *Ibid*, II.163.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, II.127.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, II.192.

Like Eyre, whose damning description of Elphinstone's faults was laid out in *Operations* despite his personal 'bias [...] altogether on the side of my late lamented military chief', Kaye's admiration for the aged hero of the Peninsular Wars could not excuse his catastrophic inertia.⁷⁶ More in sorrow than in anger, Kaye admitted that 'there is nothing sadder than the spectacle of a fine army sacrificed by the imbecility of an incapable general, and nothing more painful than to write of it'.⁷⁷ It would, he wrote, serve as a warning against future misjudgements of those with the ultimate responsibility: the Governor-General of India. The anger surfaced in his clear summary of blame, passing it upwards to the Governor-General of India as he distilled the catastrophe into the fact that 'the British army was beaten at Caubul, because it was commanded by General Elphinstone; and it was commanded by General Elphinstone, because Lord Auckland decreed that it should be so'.⁷⁸

Where Kaye was unafraid to court controversy by questioning the reputations of great men (whether in this conflict, his biographies, or later in his *History of the Sepoy War*), he did express his discomfort in his portrayal of General Elphinstone. Before publication he wrote to Mountstuart Elphinstone, asking that he be allowed to dedicate *History* to him. Given the severe criticism Kaye had made of his cousin General Elphinstone's calamitous leadership in Kabul, a refusal was only to be expected. While 'sensible [...] of the honour' Kaye was offering, Elphinstone found the treatment of his cousin 'from its nature so painful to me as to outweigh any gratification' from the dedication.⁷⁹ Kaye replied with assurances of his admiration for the General, who he had met when a subaltern in the artillery, but held firmly to his convictions that however

⁷⁶ *Operations*, p.143.

⁷⁷ *History*, (1851), II.190.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, II.191.

⁷⁹ Mountstuart Elphinstone to Kaye, 8 August 1851, BL, Elphinstone Collection (2): Private papers, correspondence and journals of Mountstuart Elphinstone, mss eur F88/161/44 ff110. Elphinstone had previously contributed an article, 'Satara - and British Connexion therewith', to *CR*, 10.20 (1848), 437-495.

'much it pained me to write as I have done [...] I believe every word to be true'.⁸⁰ As Elphinstone was one of the most respected ex-Company men alive, Kaye was prudent in trying to deflect any bad feeling with his own expressions of regret.⁸¹ Although this request over the dedication of the book did not gain Kaye any public association with the influential Mountstuart Elphinstone, within five years he was ensconced behind a desk at East India house in Leadenhall Street, London, a move that this and subsequent correspondence may have eased.⁸² Obligations and contacts wove a distinct but unseen web of influence in society. At times this was evident, as seen in testimonials in the newspapers, such as that in *Morning Post* from Elphinstone, supporting an applicant in the election to the Board of Directors at the Company.⁸³ Paying his respects to an influential Scotsman with a shared interest in literature, history, India and Afghanistan would have done Kaye's prospects in the Company no harm.

The sense of threat given by the gunpowder imagery of the preface brought an air of excitement and danger to augment the publicity for his *History* - a factor which neither Kaye nor Bentley would have ignored. The author was never as imperilled as the army in Kabul, but if he was not secure in the facts he presented he was clearly placing himself in the line of fire from aggrieved politicians and administrators, to say nothing of the survivors and families of those involved. He had noted the 'severe handling' in India given to Sale's and Eyre's captivity memoirs, by those (many with vested interests) who 'ventured [...] sometimes not very courteously, to set the historians right'.⁸⁴ Through his damning review of Harriet Martineau's *History of England during the thirty year's peace: 1816-1846* (1850), he had criticised the 'carelessness' of

⁸⁰ Kaye to Mountstuart Elphinstone 8 August 1851, Elphinstone Collection, ff108.

⁸¹ My thanks to Jack Harrington for his correspondence on this issue.

⁸² Letters between Kaye and Elphinstone over the subsequent years were increasingly cordial, especially over their shared interest in history, with Kaye requesting anecdotes, letters and papers for his biographies of Metcalfe and Malcolm. [See BL, Elphinstone Collection, F88, various].

⁸³ *Morning Post*, 13 April 1841.

⁸⁴ 'Eastern Captivity', p.432.

'European historians' (citing Alison and Macfarlane in addition to Martineau) who wrote on 'Indian episodes', including the Anglo-Afghan War.⁸⁵ Where errors in writing of obscure incidents could be forgiven, Kaye was less merciful towards historians 'blundering over ordinary events, which a reference to a file of papers, to the *Asiatic Journal*, to the *Annual Register*, to the *Parliamentary Debates*, or any other readily available authority, would enable them to set in their true light before the public'.⁸⁶ By deriding others for not checking the breadth of sources that he had, Kaye was laying claim to the superiority of his own historiography, which, in the absence of first-hand experience, was his primary claim to accuracy.

Kaye gained additional authority by the comparison to Macaulay's *History of England* (1848). The *Standard* declared that 'since the publication of Mr Macaulay's great work, nothing in the literary world has created so general a sensation as the announcement of the immediate appearance of Mr Kaye's long and eagerly looked for work on the *War in Afghanistan*'.⁸⁷ With the popularity of Scott's historical romances casting such a long shadow in the literary marketplace, Macaulay had written a compelling narrative with the express intention of outselling the novels of the day. Kaye had already shown his admiration of Macaulay's earlier work, extolling his essay on Warren Hastings which appeared in *Edinburgh Review* in 1841, for its freshness, as 'nothing so life-like - so gorgeous - so, all in all, characteristic of the "shining orient", had ever before been written'.⁸⁸ Far from Indian history presented in 'the erudite, but somewhat sterile volumes of Mill, it was refreshing indeed to dwell upon such graphic sketches as these, rife with all the accessories of romance'.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ [Kaye], 'Miss Martineau on the War in Afghanistan', *CR* 16.22 (1851), 423-455 (p.341).

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p.341.

⁸⁷ *Standard*, 23 October 1851.

⁸⁸ [Kaye], 'Memoirs of Sir Elijah Impey', *CR*, 7:14 (1847), 449-523 (p.453).

⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

Here was the conundrum debated by historians in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The orientalist Sir William Jones considered that 'the very soul and essence of History, is *Truth*' yet his empirical research was combined with a belief, as Javed Majeed has commented, that this truth (or at least a convincing historical narrative) could be somehow extracted from the Indian legends that Jones assimilated during his investigations.⁹⁰ Jones did himself recognise this essential contradiction, that while the Sciences sat at the 'truth' end of the spectrum, and the Arts at the opposite, 'fiction' end, history was in the ambiguous middle ground where 'the *details of history*, truth and fiction are so blended as to be scarce distinguishable'.⁹¹ James Mill intended the clinical erudition of his *History of British India* to maintain a critical distance from the object of its study, to avoid the bias of close observation by using translations and secondary sources.⁹² Where Jones wrote that 'no man ever became a historian in his closet', Mill considered that it was only through spending 'one year in his closet' that he gained more knowledge of India 'than he could obtain during the course of longest life, by the use of his eyes and ears in India'.⁹³

Unlike Sale and Eyre, Kaye was never in Afghanistan, so could not contribute the direct eyewitness experiences that Mill condemned as the 'fond credulity' in men like Jones.⁹⁴ But although he also shut himself up in his 'closet' with reams of private papers and letters, he produced something more human and more readable than Mill's cold philosophy. The latter saw himself as presiding over a courtroom 'in a situation very analogous to that of the judge' to weigh the evidence presented to him.⁹⁵ In this

⁹⁰ *The Works of William Jones*, ed. A.M. Jones, 6 vols (London: Robinson, 1799), v.539, quoted in Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The History of British India and Orientalism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p.32.

⁹¹ Jones, 'On Asiatic History, Civil and Natural', *Asiatick Researches*, 4 (1794), pp.1-17 (p.7), quoted in Majeed, p.33.

⁹² James Mill, *The History of British India* (London: Baldwin, 1817).

⁹³ Jones to the second Earl Spencer, 4-30 August 1787; Mill, *The History of British India*, 5th edition (1858), I, p.xxiii, quoted in Majeed, p.139.

⁹⁴ Mill, (1858), II.84, quoted in Majeed, p.135.

⁹⁵ Mill, (1858), I, p.xxv, quoted in Majeed, p.135.

analogy, perhaps Jones could be considered as an expert witness with his specialised and arcane knowledge. Kaye, therefore, could be cast as a barrister, assembling the evidence to prosecute or defend, but always with a trace of sympathy for the accused and a convincing rhetorical speech, full of telling details, with which to win over the jury. Kaye was fully aware of the absorbing powers of storytelling to convince his readers. By writing of a conflict in which he recognised clearly the structure of beginning, middle and end, he had, like Macaulay, produced a 'narrative [which] itself abounds in exciting incidents, frequently exceeding in interest the wildest romance'.⁹⁶ Reviewers considered that it would 'rank as a standard history of the Afghan war [with its] epic unity of incident and purpose [and the author's] scrupulous desire for truth'.⁹⁷ These glowing reviews augured well for lucrative sales of his *History*.

Kaye's finances were a constant problem, according to his correspondence with Richard Bentley. He made a number of requests for payments in advance of those set out in the agreements signed with the publisher. According to the notices in *Morning Post* of 29 September 1851, *History* was due to be published 'in a few days'. In settling the accounts on 30 October 1851, Bentley referred to two notes (effectively cheques to be encashed at later dates) of £150 each to be sent to Kaye as per their agreement. By 2 November, Bentley was responding to Kaye's request for 'the remaining consideration' with the awkward news that any expected profits had been wiped out by the charges from Whiting the printers for corrections needed in preparing the manuscript for publication. 'To my utter amazement I find a charge for corrections alone of not less than on Vol I £52.15 - Vol II £42.15 - Night Work and Sunday £10.8 making together

⁹⁶ *Morning Post*, 23 October 1851.

⁹⁷ *Literary Examiner*, 8 November 1851.

£105.16'.⁹⁸ However genuine Bentley's emotions were, the outrage provided him with a convenient stand from which to appeal to Kaye's sense of honour:

It is utterly impossible to conceive that any such fearful sum could have been contemplated by me in making the arrangement with you; and I feel sure that every publisher in London would pronounce decidedly in the thing being monstrous. I am quite convinced however that you yourself will at once allow that such a charge should not be made against me and I will not permit myself to think that you would wish it.⁹⁹

It was eventually agreed that Kaye would contribute £40 towards these corrections, but he could not afford to settle even this reduced sum, as Bentley wrote in a postscript to a letter dated 25 March 1852 enquiring whether Kaye had 'made any arrangement with Mr Whiting for the portion you agreed to pay for the corrections? Mr Whiting has applied to me for settlement'.¹⁰⁰ This letter was yet another attempt by Bentley to rebuff the pleadings from Kaye for more money. The original contract dated 6 January 1851 had given him £300 on publication, with a further £100 if sales reached 1,250 and 1,400 copies respectively, but Kaye appeared to have suggested payments in advance. Bentley initially refused in elegant language:

The present aspect of politics and the general paralysis of business oblige me to regard the modification of our Agreement by anticipating payments with any other feeling than sanguine. I cannot bargain with you: and would in all sincerity prefer that the agreement should stand, being content to wait patiently

⁹⁸ Bentley to Kaye, 2 November 1851, BtA, Add mss 46615, f.173.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Bentley to Kaye, 25 March 1852, BtA, 46615, f.214.

for the ripening of the fruit, though as I have said, I am by no means sanguine about it.¹⁰¹

Within days Bentley had paid the outstanding debt to Whiting and this amount was made part of the new agreement with Kaye for *History*, dated 5 April 1852.¹⁰² If Kaye did not repay the debt by 1 January 1853, the publisher would be free to withhold the sum from any literary work of his handled by Bentley. A pencilled note excluded *Bentley's Miscellany* prior to 1 April 1853 from this arrangement. The document set out the new terms covering *History*. Instead of sums above £300 being contingent upon sales, Bentley now agreed to pay Kaye £450 outright for the work. The 1851 agreement had a codicil in a different handwriting, requesting that Bentley print 1,500 copies of the work on the understanding that Kaye pay the costs of the extra 500 copies if less than 1,000 sold within the year. There is no reference to this in the 1852 agreement, or any information in the ledgers on the print run or sales figures. Any work of correcting or condensing required for future editions was to be done by the author at no extra charge, but there was no mention of these being restricted to a two-volume format. Of greater significance was the omission of any reference as to whether the copyright would revert to the author, as would be the case after two years, according to the original contract. All further contracts, such as the one signed on 1 October 1853 for his life of *Metcalf*, included a clause relating to excessive corrections, where 'any charge by the printers [...] for correcting at press shall be borne and defrayed by the said J.W. Kaye'.¹⁰³

A further agreement dated 5 April 1853, related to *The Reign of the Merchant Princes in India*, published in the same month under the title of *The Administration of*

¹⁰¹ Bentley to Kaye, 25 March 1852, BtA, 46615, f.214.

¹⁰² Agreement between Kaye and Bentley, 5 April 1852, BtA, 46616, f.116.

¹⁰³ Kaye, ed., *The life and correspondence of Charles, Lord Metcalfe: late governor-general of India, governor of Jamaica, and governor-general of Canada, from unpublished letters and journals preserved by himself, his family, and his friends* 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1854); Agreement between Kaye and Bentley, 5 April 1852, BtA, 46616, ff.258-9.

the East India Government.¹⁰⁴ Bentley had no high hopes for this book, which he considered 'will not probably possess the same interest with the public as your admirable Narrative of the Afghan War' and only agreed to publish it on terms of equal profits with Kaye.¹⁰⁵ As Bentley's Authors' Accounts ledger shows, Kaye's largest payments came from the three main works of history and biography published between 1851 and 1854. *History* earned him £450, *Administration* £100 and *Metcalfe* £300.¹⁰⁶ Despite his attempts to fashion a history that capitalised on public interest in Afghanistan and the general critical acclaim with which it was received, his *History* was not a bestseller in the mould of Eyre's or Sale's narratives, netting Kaye less than half of the sums they each earned from their work.

Situating Kaye's *History* with reference to *ILN*, noticeably the date of the first edition coincided with the only year in the journal's first half-century in which there was no mention of Afghanistan at all. This gives a double disadvantage, as Afghanistan was quite literally out of the news, and his new book was not picked up by *ILN*. *The Times* has only six mentions of Afghanistan in 1851, none of which refer to Kaye, and is the lowest hit rate for the entire hundred years of this study.¹⁰⁷ By the time of the second edition in 1857, the impact of the 'Mutiny' had brought the subcontinent back into the headlines and Afghanistan made seven appearances in *ILN* and 74 in *The Times*. When Allen published a third edition in 1874, the 'Central Asian Question' was a warm topic, and Bellew's travelogue *From the Indus to the Tigris* had stirred up twelve hits in *ILN* and 45 in *The Times*.¹⁰⁸ With the fourth edition, although 1890 only had seven hits, the

¹⁰⁴ Kaye, *The Administration of the East India Company: A History of Indian Progress* (London: Bentley, 1853).

¹⁰⁵ Bentley to Kaye, 27 January 1852, BtA, 46615, f.203.

¹⁰⁶ Using the purchasing power calculator at < <http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/> > [accessed 12 September 2013], this equates to £34,660, £7,702 and £23,110 respectively at 2011 values, the most recent comparison available.

¹⁰⁷ This contrasts with the 246 hits for 1842 and 753 and 759 hits for 1879 and 1880 respectively. Kaye's *History* was advertised in *The Times* on 7 February 1852.

¹⁰⁸ Henry Walter Bellew, *From the Indus to the Tigris: a narrative of a journey through the countries of Balochistan, Afghanistan, Khorassan and Iran, in 1872: together with a synoptical grammar and*

previous year had seen raised anxieties over the Trans-Caspian railway and a Russian invasion of Afghanistan, which with a flurry of books on the area gave 14 hits, compared with *The Times* mentioning Afghanistan 83 times in 1889 and 78 in 1890, the lowest hit rate within the surrounding twenty years. These figures, extrapolated from my online research, suggest that the minor ebb and flow of newsworthy interest in Afghanistan between the major Anglo-Afghan conflicts affected how widely Kaye's work was reviewed and sold.

Administration, his history of the East India Company, did not have any particular events to lift it to readers' attention, and given its flattering approach, would jar uncomfortably with the 'Mutiny' four years in the future. Kaye's hopes for a lucrative return on *Administration* were certainly unsupported by critical reviews, which considered it 'not half as good as the *History of the War in Afghanistan*'.¹⁰⁹ After his efforts to present a work of rigour and balance in *History*, the skewed prospectus of *Administration* provoked hostility to what critics read as Kaye's view that in India 'whatever good has been done is the work of the East India Company - and [...] all the evil has been the work of the Ministers of the Crown'.¹¹⁰ Literary accolades may not have been his sole aim: Peers credibly suggests that this 'nakedly partisan defence' was an opportunistic bid by Kaye for a Company job. This ties in with his assiduous efforts to dedicate his *History* to Mountstuart Elphinstone. He entered the civil service of the East India Company in 1856 and, after the transfer to the Crown, Kaye followed John Stuart Mill in becoming secretary to the foreign department at the India Office in 1858.¹¹¹

vocabulary of the Brahoe language, etc. (London: Trübner, 1874) was reviewed in *ILN* on 24 January 1874, but only in *The Times* on 1 April 1875.

¹⁰⁹ *Literary Examiner*, 28 May 1853.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Peers, (2003), p.285.

The bias in *Administration* was such that questions were raised during the Government of India debate in the House of Commons as to 'whether [it] had been paid for directly or indirectly out of the funds of the Company - that was, out of the taxes of the people of India? - for there was a rumour to that effect'.¹¹² Sensitivity already existed as to how far historians were free from the bias of personal and political influences, following an earlier controversy of rival narratives, which was also referred to by the MP Mr Danby Seymour in June 1853. He alleged that a proposed third volume of Mountstuart Elphinstone's *History of India*, 'which lay now in his closet finished, but not published', was deliberately suppressed by the East India Company on the grounds that Elphinstone's work 'was not so favourable to them and their views as they could have wished', so they employed Edward Thornton to write a history of India that cast them in a better light.¹¹³ Seymour claimed that 'the Company expended £7,000 in disseminating that work, which was so bad that it was now a drug in the market'.¹¹⁴ While the result of this misuse of company funds was that 'the public was deprived of the satisfaction of having the continuation of Mr. Elphinstone's work, because he was a poor man, and could not afford to publish his history at a loss', the bibliography of this work shows that two extant volumes of Elphinstone's *History of India* managed at least nine editions stretching from the first edition of 1841 well into the twentieth century.¹¹⁵ Nor did Thornton's work, so castigated by Seymour, completely fail; the compiler of *Gazetteers for the East India Company* had his 1841 six volume *History of the British Empire in India* reach its second edition in 1858, though whether this was due to critical acclaim or financial subsidy is unclear.

¹¹² Mr Darby Seymour, 9 June 1853, Hansard, vol.128, cc.1336.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* Elphinstone's *Kingdom* had for many years been considered the authoritative work on Afghanistan. (See Introduction, above).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

The use of published works in parliamentary debates, with their resultant circulation (and recirculation) through newspaper reports of the speeches, has already been evidenced with Sale's letters and Eyre's *Journal* in the previous chapter. Eleven years later Afghanistan again proved the absorbing theme, and it was Kaye's renowned *History* that Seymour quoted from in his parliamentary speech, using it to argue that 'no man in his senses could put any confidence in papers that came from the East India Company'.¹¹⁶ The issue of the suppression of documents was raised in the House some eight days later by Mr Richard Cobden, who read out a substantial footnote from *History* that blamed the mutilation of official correspondence on 'the unsparing hand of the State anatomist' as the cause of 'the dishonesty by which lie by lie is palmed upon the world'.¹¹⁷ Kaye's claims to have based his work on primary sources was thus inscribed in Hansard and in parliamentary reports in the Press, as Cobden quoted from Kaye that 'official documents are the sheet-anchors of historians [and] if these documents are tampered with [...] the grave of truth is dug [...] and in place of sober history we have a florid romance'.¹¹⁸

Kaye gave opponents of government secrecy a coherent and eloquent form of attack. The release of the 1839 Blue Book initiated a debate in which the Government laid before parliament evidence to support their rationale for involvement in Afghanistan. Objections were raised as to the interpretation put on Sir Alexander Burnes' reports, on the grounds that the documents had been abridged to disguise his strong opposition to deposing Dost Mohammed. These objections had first been made by Burnes himself, in letters to his friends and family on reading the Blue Book, although as a political officer he was obliged to be more circumspect in his official

¹¹⁶ Mr Darby Seymour, 9 June 1853, Hansard, vol.128, cc.1330.

¹¹⁷ *History*, (1851), i.195 footnote; Mr Richard Cobden, 17 June 1853, Hansard, vol.128, cc.378-9.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

communications.¹¹⁹ In 1842, with Burnes dead and the fate of the captives still undecided, concerns were raised in the House over Burnes' correspondence; that his 'opinions had been suppressed, and that portions only of his correspondence had been produced', that the Government had 'falsified the evidence' and despatches 'had been systematically falsified, in order to pervert their meaning'.¹²⁰ This matter was raised in the intervening years through the collaboration of the energetic George Buist, editor of the *Bombay Times* and Sir Alexander's elder brother, James Burnes. Within weeks of the publication of *History*, Kaye was providing ammunition for detailed parliamentary debates as Sir Henry Willoughby informed the House:

in that work it is stated, in the strongest language, that the despatches of Sir Alexander Burnes were garbled and emasculated by the State anatomists—that the pith and marrow of the despatches were taken out of them—that lie upon lie was palmed upon the world, and that the characters of Dost Mahomed and Sir Alexander Burnes were lied away.¹²¹

In 1857, as the British committed troops to a Persian Expedition over control of the city of Herat in western Afghanistan, a debate following the Queen's Speech again raised the spectre of Burnes' missing despatches. Mr Henry Baillie noted the sixteen million pound cost of the Afghan War and that 'the secret history of that war had never been communicated to Parliament'.¹²² His requests at the time for 'certain papers' had been refused, 'but the despatches of Sir A. Burns were subsequently published by his friends, and it then appeared that the original despatches presented to Parliament had

¹¹⁹ See G.J. Adler, 'The 'Garbled' Blue Books of 1839 - Myth or Reality?', *The Historical Journal*, 15:2 (June 1972), 229-259, for a detailed investigation of this affair.

¹²⁰ Mr Joseph Hume, 23 June 1842, Hansard, vol 64, cc.434-536, 534; Mr John Roebuck, 1 March 1843, Hansard, vol 67, cc.119-212, 208; Mr Thomas Anstey, 3 April 1851, Hansard, vol 115, cc.969-1006, 985.

¹²¹ Sir Henry Willoughby, 17 February 1852, Hansard, vol 119, cc.652-3, a paraphrasing of Kaye's footnote in *History*, (1851), i.195.

¹²² Mr Henry Baillie, 3 February 1857, Hansard, vol.144, cc.174.

been mutilated to serve the purposes of the Ministry that commenced the war'.¹²³ The allusion to Kaye's *History* was timely as it was likely to be this focus on Persia, one of the players in the Great Game, which had spurred Kaye and Bentley to produce a second edition of *History*, this time in three volumes. Volumes one and two appeared in 1857 and volume three in 1858. As the preface for this edition is dated January 1857 and refers to publication being 'retarded by accidental circumstances' there cannot be a link to the outbreak of the 'Mutiny' in India in May 1857.¹²⁴ Kaye had no sense of imminent foreboding of the 'Mutiny' and presumably kept to his opinion of seven years previously, when he reviewed the letters of 'an old Bengal civilian' who querulously considered 'that the most fearful of all disasters would be a revolt of the native troops [which] will be upon us, before we have time to arrest it'.¹²⁵ Writing in *CR* for his Anglo-Indian audience, Kaye dismissed the threat of mutiny, reassuring his readers that 'there is very little danger of this, so long as we are tolerably discreet'.¹²⁶ It is noteworthy that the 'Mutiny', of which Kaye was so dismissive, should provide the subject matter for which he received the greatest literary acclaim, his *History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857-1858*, first published in 1864 by Allen.

Vanity may have influenced his decision to publish a second edition of his *History*. The Persian Expedition drew renewed attention to Afghanistan, as Herat again became a prize to be fought over. The sense of authority granted to his work, by the positive press reviews and the frequent references in parliamentary debates, made it expedient to 'refresh' the work with a new edition, despite Kaye's assertion, in the new preface, that 'without unreasonable self-congratulation' he could 'assert that few works of contemporary history [...] have been so little questioned and controverted'.¹²⁷ Kaye

¹²³ Mr Henry Baillie, 3 February 1857, Hansard, vol.144, cc.174.

¹²⁴ *History*, (1857), I, p.vii.

¹²⁵ [Kaye], 'Civis on Indian Affairs', *CR*, 13.26 (1850), 406-441 (p.424).

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p.424.

¹²⁷ *History*, (1857), I, p.vi.

did not benefit financially from any increased sales: the revised agreement of April 1852 had given him an outright payment for *History's* copyright.

The ledgers show that by 1857 his business connection with Bentley's had been dormant for two years and there was less than four pounds to come to him in the near future from the profit on his edited collection of Tucker's papers. By now he was a civil servant at India House and his books were being published by Smith, Elder. He was contractually bound to 'correct and condense [...] and prepare for the press, all future Editions of the aforesaid work without charge to the said Richard Bentley', a task he completed diligently with the help of friends.¹²⁸ He claimed not to find this particularly onerous as there were, he wrote few 'material corrections' and the revision of *History* from two to three volumes suited a series of events falling 'naturally into three distinct groups, giving the epic completeness of a beginning, a middle, and an end [that] all parts of the Work fell so naturally into their proper places, that there was little left for art to accomplish'.¹²⁹ As Kaye had held this view since his opening article in *CR* in 1844, where he described the war as an 'exciting romance' fitting naturally into three volumes, it was surprising that he did not argue with greater determination for his work to be published in this format from the start.

In an article in *CR* of 1847, Kaye referred to Macaulay's popular essays from the *Edinburgh Review*, published as a three-volume book in 1843. It was these volumes which Kaye claimed could be found 'in almost every library in Great Britain; and [...] never permitted to rest long on the library shelves. The dust never accumulates about them'.¹³⁰ Kaye was consciously fashioning his work on Afghanistan to be of equivalent status to Macaulay, hence the reference in the original agreement for *History* that it be

¹²⁸ Agreement between Kaye and Bentley, 5 April 1852, BtA, 46616, f.116.

¹²⁹ *History*, (1857), I, pp.v-vii.

¹³⁰ 'Memoirs of Sir Elijah Impey', p.454.

'similar in size to [...] Macaulay's *History of England*'.¹³¹ By producing a book in the three-volume format most attractive to the circulating libraries that existed in practically every town in England, Kaye and Bentley extended the potential market for this work, as it could maximise the return on the purchase price, by being lent out to three different paying readers at a time. The publisher's ledgers show that 1,410 copies (presumably equal numbers of the first two volumes) were printed in 1857, with 1,000 of the third volume printed in 1858. Sales were in the low hundreds in the first few years, with Bentley suffering an initial loss of £150. In 1867 only one copy was recorded as having sold. In the financial year to 31 March 1874 the decision was taken to sell the 77 stereo plates for £60. Allen used them to publish the third edition of *History* in 1874, with a fourth and final edition appearing in 1890.

With the two-volume *History*, the narrative was kept tightly to the main body of text on the page. Kaye was aware that his evidence was in the form of documents 'singly accessible to only a few, and collectively, perhaps to no one but myself' and he felt it would interrupt his narrative flow if he 'overburden[ed] my work with quotations', deciding that it was preferable to note his sources in footnotes rather than 'fuse these materials into my text'.¹³² A subsequent fire in Kaye's study that - perhaps conveniently for him - destroyed much of the evidence upon which his work was based, prevented further access to these documents. It is surely a strange coincidence that this occurred following a dispute with the quarrelsome Sir William Napier after a critical review of his *Conquest of Scinde*, which Kaye considered 'bristles with the controversial asperities of a party pamphlet'.¹³³ The resulting correspondence in *The Times* over facts, despatches and interpretations, ended with a bad-tempered Napier dragging Shakespeare into his final insult:

¹³¹ Agreement between Kaye and Bentley, 6 January 1851, BtA, 46615, f.297.

¹³² *History*, (1851), I, pp.vi, vii.

¹³³ *Bentley's Miscellany*, 31 (1852), pp.85.

[Kaye] I am told, writes history [...] if he is as prodigal with words and as stingy of facts, he had better, though no great conjuror, like Prospero, burn his books and bid farewell to his tricky spirit.¹³⁴

Maybe Kaye had burned his books, although he gave no appearance of having dismissed his 'tricky spirit'. For the three-volume edition, many of these footnotes were incorporated into the text, giving it a denser texture, more authoritative and weighty than the original. Perhaps the most significant inclusion into the body of the text was the paragraph that had become famous by having been twice laid before the House, regarding the 'state-anatomist [by whom] lie upon lie is palmed upon the world'.¹³⁵ In Kaye's writings to date, he had always shown bravado in tackling controversial topics, but this inclusion of a written aside into the intrinsic narrative demonstrates a strengthening confidence in his own editorial commentary.

Kaye's official work for the East India Company from 1856 until he retired due to ill-health in 1874 did not prevent his continued production of historical and biographical writings. The proposed series of eight to ten volumes under the title *Lives of the Governors General of India*, the agreement for which he signed with Richard Bentley on the same day as *History*, fragmented into individual biographies and edited letters with a variety of publishers. His subjects included Henry Tucker, Charles Metcalfe and John Malcolm, and the collection, *Lives of Indian Officers*, gathered together the series on 'Indian Heroes' he had written for *Good Words* from 1865-6. Kaye hoped this collection, covering the lives of twelve men, would 'be regarded in some sort as a Biographical History of India from the days of Cornwallis to the days of Canning'.¹³⁶ These were the results of his years of research and the amassing of 'large manuscript volumes [...] full of personal correspondence and biographical notes [and]

¹³⁴ *Times*, 7 August 1852.

¹³⁵ *History*, (1851), 1.195 footnote; in all other editions, 1.203.

¹³⁶ *Lives of Indian Officers*, p.x.

original papers'.¹³⁷ He may not have been able to 'discharge [his] trust [and] promise' to write a separate book on Sir James Outram, but he considered he had fulfilled his duty to the Company's men, India's 'Monarchy of the Middle Classes'.¹³⁸

These biographies were the separate strands of the material used by Kaye to produce his histories - whether that of the Afghan War, considered in this chapter, or his influential history of the 'Mutiny' of 1857, completed after his death in 1876 by Malleison. His *History* was a judgement on the characters influencing and involved in the Afghan war, avoiding the defensive self-justifications of those, like Sale and Eyre, who were there. Kaye believed that the expansionist policy in Afghanistan, based on the 'jingling of the moneybags, and the gleaming of the bayonets' which usurped Dost Mohammed and set Shah Shujah on the throne at Kabul, was 'disastrous, because it was unjust [...] an unrighteous usurpation, and the curse of God was on it from the first'.¹³⁹ It was the duty of the historian to 'group into one intelligible whole all the crowded circumstances' of the war in order to clearly show running 'like a great river, through his narrative' that 'the wisdom of our statesmen is but foolishness, and the might of our armies is but weakness, when the curse of God is sitting heavily upon an unholy cause'.¹⁴⁰ As Singh has noted, Kaye opposed the expansionist policy in Afghanistan on both moral and financial grounds, and he therefore interpreted events accordingly - those he approved of were 'successful', those he disapproved of were 'unsuccessful'.¹⁴¹

Kaye's political judgements were based on his assessment of character, and he gained access to the inner workings of many minds through the private papers he acquired. These papers enabled him to challenge and refute the official version of

¹³⁷ *Lives of Indian Officers*, p.v.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p.ix, xii.

¹³⁹ *History*, (1851), I.460; II.670. The image of jingling moneybags undoubtedly appealed to Kaye, as he also used it on pages 308 and 479 of volume I.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, II.219, 250.

¹⁴¹ Singh, pp.272-3.

events. That he could do this to such great effect was based on the literary status he had built up over the years. As contributor, then editor and owner of various Indian journals, he could respond quickly to unfolding events. His fiction was, as I have shown, intertwined with his journalism but gave him a greater scope to experiment with ways of storytelling. Finally, his ability to draw together the documentary material used for the many and detailed biographies contributed effectively to his histories, where evidence and interpretation were woven into a visible and overarching narrative. Through each of these different literary genres, from the 'trick of essay-writing [begun] very early in life' to the serious and multi-sourced studies of military and political events, he was helped by his shrewd focus on one of the most controversial subjects of the time, the dramatic progress of Britain's first war in Afghanistan.¹⁴² Building on the popularity of the eye-witness accounts of Sale, Eyre and others, he was able to shape his work to appeal to various overlapping communities of readers.

Kaye claimed the territory of Afghanistan as his own area of expertise, built through the careful reworking and consolidating of narratives of the First Anglo-Afghan War. Later to deal comprehensively with the 'Mutiny', his status as historian rested firmly on Afghan foundations. Far from concentrating on a particular conflict or country, my next author, George Alfred Henty, dealt in History in a much broader and looser sense, picking a wide assortment of battles, nationalities and periods to reassure his young readers of British superiority. How and why Afghanistan was used in his stories, and the inferences that can be drawn as to the public appetite for reading about the First and Second Anglo-Afghan Wars, are central to the next chapter.

¹⁴² *Optimist*, p.167.

A Time of Heroes: The Second Anglo-Afghan War, 1878-1880

'My Dear Lads': Henty's Heroes in Afghanistan

The Second Anglo-Afghan War brought forth an abundance of eyewitness accounts from soldiers and special correspondents, as well as the hurried dusting down and reprinting of accounts from the First War. This chapter's case study of a popular writer of historical adventure stories for boys, George Alfred Henty (1832-1902), demonstrates the upsurge of interest in Afghanistan that took hold of the popular imagination in the early 1880s, following the second military engagement with Afghanistan. When a Russian diplomatic mission was accepted in Kabul and a corresponding British one stopped at the entrance to the Khyber Pass, a three-pronged invasion force was sent from India in 1878. The British military success won some concessions, including the placing of a diplomatic mission in Kabul. After the army had withdrawn, an uprising of mutinous Afghan troops led to the slaughter of the British Resident and his staff and escort in September 1879. With sharp memories of the humiliations of 1842, and of the Indian 'Mutiny' two decades before, the British forces acted decisively in returning to Afghanistan to exact retribution. After the British were defeated at Maiwand and besieged in Kandahar, a forced march from Kabul, led by Frederick Roberts in August 1880, resulted in a British victory and a treaty ceding them control over Afghanistan's foreign policy. The on-going resonances of the heroic marches and battles, with the dark shadow of the retreat and disaster of forty years before, were utilised and occasionally plagiarised by this opportunistic writer (who, like Kaye, never visited Afghanistan) in his grasping of subjects that would appeal to the growing market for juvenile fiction. Interest in the Second Anglo-Afghan War and its

real life heroes gave books dealing with these themes a highly topical appeal at odds with their casual composition and formulaic plot devices. This supports the trajectory traced by this thesis, with the peak of interest at this time clearly illustrated in the ease with which an indifferent 'hack' could take advantage of his young readers' appetites for Afghanistan. In this chapter I investigate the composition, bibliography and content of four of his stories, *For Name and Fame* [hereafter *Name*], *To Herat and Cabul* [hereafter *Herat*], *Through Three Campaigns* [hereafter *Campaigns*] and 'A Soldier's Daughter' [hereafter 'Daughter'], to consider why Henty chose to set them in Afghanistan.¹

Introduction

George Alfred Henty, bestselling Boys' historian, wrote a series of books combining various military events with their associated heroic figures into a compelling historical account of the British Empire, inserting into each of his narratives an idealised boy full of British pluck, with whom readers could identify. His use of the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80) and the heroic figure of Major-General Frederick Roberts within five years of the war ending was a departure from his usual practice. I propose that *Name*, as one of his first stories to deal with recent events, was triggered by the tremendous public interest in Roberts' exploits, enhanced by articles in *ILN* and their accompanying photographs. Combining close readings of this and the three subsequent stories I have selected, with Blackie's sales figures, I consider which factors most affected the popularity of his books: historical events in Afghanistan, the boyish fictional characters, or the real-life figures involved. These elements complemented the Victorian enthusiasm for reading about heroes, a practice that strongly influenced the

¹ George Alfred Henty, *For Name and Fame, or Through Afghan Passes* (London: Blackie, 1886); *To Herat and Cabul: a Story of the First Afghan War* (London: Blackie, 1902); *Through Three Campaigns: a Story of Chitral, Tirah and Ashantee* (London: Blackie, 1904; n.p.: Dodo Press, n.d.); 'A Soldier's Daughter' in *A Soldier's Daughter and other stories* (London: Blackie, 1906).

youthful minds of the future soldiers and administrators of empire. The mountainous passes of Afghanistan, with their fierce, independent tribesmen made familiar by Elphinstone and Scott, haunted by the dramatic accounts of Sale, Eyre and others, were by now appearing in the pages of *ILN*. This was a rich literary landscape to test the mettle of potential heroes.

Henty described himself as 'a fierce and truculent Briton, ready to defy the whole world'.² The sheer volume of books he wrote for boys - some 120 titles - as well as the short stories for children's periodicals, overshadowed his earlier journalistic writings as a war correspondent. He also wrote eleven novels for adults, but none of these sold well. Research has as yet only covered limited archives. The ledgers of his main British publisher Blackie end in 1917, and a vast number of pirated versions of his work, in America and elsewhere, proliferated before the International Copyright Act of 1891 enabled Henty and Blackie to receive royalties from Scribner authorised editions in America. Anecdotal evidence suggests British sales figures of 150,000 per year from Blackie and, when the three and a half million they had produced were added to the various overseas and pirated versions, the publisher concluded 'it looks as if 25,000,000 is not impossible'.³ These high sales figures demonstrate the popularity of Henty as a writer of boys' fiction; my study specifically compares the popularity of his titles dealing with Afghanistan to the popularity of his other titles.

As a journalist, Henty's most significant non-military assignment was to cover the tour of Edward, Prince of Wales to India in 1875-6, which got him as near to Afghanistan as he would ever reach. From November 1875, when the *Seraphis* docked at Bombay, to its departure in March 1876, the Prince, his entourage and the assembled

² Patrick Dunae, 'G.A. Henty', in Ira Nadel and William Fredeman, eds., *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol 18 'Victorian Novelists after 1885' (Ann Arbor: Gale, 1983), 142-148 (p.145).

³ Quote from Robert Darrt's 1971 *G.A. Henty, A Bibliography*, in Guy Arnold, *Held Fast for England: G.A. Henty Imperialist Boys' Writer* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980), p.17.

special correspondents were whisked around the highlights of India at a speed that made the correspondent of *The Times* feel as if he had 'been thrown into the rapids above Niagara and [...] emerged from the pool under the Horse Shoe Falls'.⁴ Greenberger considers that Henty travelled 'the length and breadth of the country' on this trip, but what was gained in distance was perhaps lost in the superficial whirl of processions, speeches, ceremonies and society balls.⁵ Henty's involvement, as special correspondent for the *Standard*, was to report back to Britain the visit of the Prince in what was, according to Hahn, 'a sensational domestic media event'.⁶ This was a carefully arranged display of the future king to, and in, the setting of the imperial Jewel in the Crown. Touring India, Edward was presented with selective challenges which 'he would meet [...] with no difficulty', to show both British and Indian audiences that he 'was worthy of inheriting the Empire'.⁷ In this aspect he reflected the essential Henty hero 'to whom life was a series of opportunities [...] to surmount crisis by action and, as a reward, to take his place in a stable society where both foreigners and workers will be kept in their place'.⁸ This blending of reportage and fiction increased the perception of India as a place of 'dazzling spectacle' and 'medieval pageantry', phrases used by Henty's colleague and biographer to describe the lure of 'the brilliant East'.⁹ Fenn commented on the comparison of the 'squalor and misery of civil war' covered in Henty's last assignment with the 'pleasure trip' provided by India, where he 'travelled through a country in holiday guise'.¹⁰ As in Henty's stories with their blend of history and fiction,

⁴ *Times*, 28 December 1875.

⁵ Allen Greenberger, *The British Image of India: A study in the Literature of Imperialism 1880-1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.207.

⁶ H.Hazel Hahn, 'Indian princes, dancing girls and tigers: the Prince of Wales's tour of India and Ceylon, 1875-1876', *Postcolonial Studies*, 12.2 (2009), 73-192 (p.173).

⁷ *Ibid*, p.182. Fortunately the Prince no longer had to win his throne through armed combat; he took four shots to 'bag' his tiger during a hunt in Jeypore.

⁸ Edward Ingram, *Empire-Building and Empire-Builders: Twelve Studies* (London: Cass, 1995), p.185.

⁹ George Manville Fenn, *George Alfred Henty: The Story of an Active Life* (London: Blackie, 1907), p.276.

¹⁰ Fenn, p.276.

similarly, this assignment was written up as 'a long series of Eastern fields of the cloth of gold' that read 'like an extract of the *Arabian Nights*'.¹¹

Meanwhile Afghanistan had fallen from its high point of interest in the immediate aftermath of the First Anglo-Afghan War to being of negligible concern to readers, with annual references in *ILN* only exceeding single figures three times in the late 1860s and early 1870s, as Herat and the 'Central Asia Question' were discussed. In contrast to the 255 hits combining 'Prince of Wales' with 'India' from the first mention of the proposed visit in July 1875 to an advertisement for an illustrated book featuring images from the tour in December 1876; a combination of 'Prince of Wales' and 'Afghanistan' only produces five hits over the same period. These references were consistent in their emphasis on Afghanistan's geographical and historical distance, whether as one of the remote regions with which the 'native bankers' of Delhi do business or as ancient history, a place of origins, where Kings and Parsees come *from*, not (by implication) where British royalty travel *to*.¹² Not until Britain's military and diplomatic invasion in 1878-80 did Afghanistan again become sufficiently newsworthy to British readers for references in the papers to overtake the previous high-water mark of Sale.

Henty's writing relating to the Afghan Frontier can only be interpreted through the filter of his remarkably successful output in children's literature. His decision to leave the active journalism of war correspondence was triggered by domestic and health considerations. That of becoming a writer of stories was influenced by current political and educational policies. The Education Act of 1870 introduced compulsory elementary education for all children, opening a distinct market for juvenile literature; according to the journalist and editor W.T. Stead, it 'practically created a new reading

¹¹ Fenn, pp.276-7, 281-2.

¹² *ILN*, 16 October 1875, see also 20 November 1875 and 16 May 1876.

public'.¹³ Not only were textbooks required for the schoolroom, but also these new and youthful readers also wanted to put their skills to use for themselves. From presents, prizes and rewards, to the libraries in schools and reading rooms in Mechanics' Institutes, and from the monthly magazines with high production values to the cheap and pernicious 'penny dreadful', this juvenile audience demanded a new, engaging and less overtly didactic style of writing. Henty developed a clever blend of historical fact with adventure fiction: the former to reassure parents and schoolteachers, the latter to make the history 'palatable to his young readers'.¹⁴ The success of his early stories encouraged him to keep to historical themes, and his goal was to write an adventure story for every war which Britain had fought.

Henty's usual style of composition involved studying texts from the London Library for background over some ten days, then launching into the story without, as he claimed, 'any previous idea whatever of what the story is going to be'.¹⁵ This slightly disingenuous claim ignores both his reliance on the fixed points of historical events he incorporated and his increasingly formulaic storylines, which frequently involved his hero being held hostage. With two or three such episodes per book, this useful ploy to avoid direct involvement in a battle or to advance the narrative became wearily predictable. Between the hours of nine thirty and one, and again from seven thirty until ten in the evening, Henty (wreathed in pipe smoke and either pacing up and down or reclining on his sofa surrounded by his dogs) dictated to his amanuensis at a rate of a chapter a day, some 6,500 words. By dictating 'every word', Henty believed that 'in that

¹³ Quoted in Patrick Dunne, 'New Grub Street for boys', in *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, ed. by Jeffrey Richards (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 12-33 (p.14).

¹⁴ Arnold, p.39.

¹⁵ Raymond Blathwayt, 'How Boy's Books are Written: A Talk with G.A. Henty', in *Great Thoughts from Master Minds*, October 1902, quoted in *Henty Society Bulletin*, No.6 (December 1978), p.1. [Hereafter HSB]

way I think you obtain larger, finer sentences'.¹⁶ He originally was against shorthand, asking instead for 'a smart long-hand man', to whom he dictated at fast writing speed.¹⁷ By 1899 Henty had relented on the method of recording his work, telling an interviewer 'I tell my stories - dictate them to my Secretary. He takes them in shorthand, transcribes them, and reads them to me. Thus I criticise them, and correct them if necessary'.¹⁸ This method of composition was a sophisticated version of the protracted bedtime narratives he invented when his children were young, prompting his friend and fellow writer George Manville Fenn to write in his memorial biography that 'throughout his life Henty practised story-telling as opposed to story-writing'.¹⁹

His object might have been 'to write good history', but this was not consistently successful. With what Gunby (in his discussion on Henty's "borrowings") recognises as his 'near reverential treatment of historical fact', the young hero is rarely allowed anywhere near to the scene of some exciting battle, lest he infect the historical truth of the account with his fictional presence.²⁰ Apart from the numerous contorted plot lines that remove the hero from the scene of action, these separations within the text, and the differing styles due to the method of composition, resulted in an unevenness of tone, a disjunction between the adventurous and historical components of the story. Many boys were bored by 'the solid chunks of history which took up a large proportion of his space [and] militated against the quick pace, the crescendo of excitement, so necessary in serials'.²¹ This blending of history and fiction was an accepted part of children's literature, clearly differentiating it from the trashier 'penny dreadful', but it was

¹⁶ Raymond Blathwayt in Peter Newbolt, *G.A. Henty 1832-1902: A Bibliographical Study of his British Editors with short accounts of his Publishers, Illustrators and Designers, and Notes on Production Methods used for his Books*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia: Polyglot Press, 2005), p.556.

¹⁷ Edmund Downey, *Twenty Years Ago: A Book of Anecdote illustrating Literary Life in London* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1905), p.116.

¹⁸ *Gem*, 16 December 1899, p.209, quoted in Newbolt, pp.664-5.

¹⁹ Fenn, p.328.

²⁰ David Gunby, 'Maori and Settler or, A Boy's-Eye View of a Superior Colony', *Islands* (Spring 1972), article reproduced in *HSB*, 6 (December 1978), 3-6 (p.5).

²¹ *Captain*, 18 March 1908. p.472, quoted in Dunae (1989), p.28.

important to have the right balance of didacticism and adventure, offering the latter as a reward for persisting with the former. In 1932, a reviewer of *The G.A. Henty Omnibus Book* wrote that 'one has heard plenty of complaints from boys that Henty opposes their progress by barbed-wire entanglements of history, but none that when he re-descends from camp and council room to the doings of the individual he is a dullard'.²²

There were, though, many who claimed to have been influenced by Henty's histories to take up the subject themselves. The historians A.J.P. Taylor, Godfrey Davis and Robert Huttenback have acknowledged their debt to his writings, despite his inaccurate and oversimplified historical accounts.²³ Taylor recalled finding Henty's values 'very great nonsense' and the stories 'comic as well as exciting: they were too good to be true' yet still considered them to be 'very good [...] all the same'.²⁴ From re-enacting the battle diagrams with his toy soldiers, he absorbed sufficient information that, decades later, 'vague recollections from Henty carried me through when I had to lecture on the Thirty Years' War at Manchester University'.²⁵

Much has been made of Henty's boyish heroes, that 'conservative, xenophobic, and ethnocentric' series of interchangeable lads who are the adolescent embodiment of Henty's own education, with its emphasis on sporting prowess rather than academic excellence.²⁶ The action takes place in the few years between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, restrictions Henty felt were demanded by his readers 'as boys want their heroes to be boys'.²⁷ Where Kipling's *Kim* ends on a note of ambiguous contemplation in India, Henty's young men take their V.C.s and the gratitude of generals back to

²² *TLS*, 24 November 1932, p.8.

²³ Dunae (1983), p.148.

²⁴ A.J.P. Taylor, 'Prince of Storytellers' (review of Guy Arnold's *Held Fast for England*) *Observer*, 13 April 1980.

²⁵ Brooke Allen, 'G.A. Henty and the vision of empire' in *New Criterion*, April 2002, 20-24 (p.21).

²⁶ Dunae, (1983), p.147; For the influence of the 'secular trinity [of] imperialism, militarism and athleticism' common during Henty's schooldays, see J.A. Mangan, 'Play up and Play the Game: Victorian and Edwardian Public School Vocabularies of Motive', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 23.3 (October 1975), 324-335 (p.324).

²⁷ Henty in Newbolt, p.558.

Britain, to adorn the comfortable life of a country gentleman sustained by the rewards of his exploits, or the legacies of father-figures. This he is always suited for, as even when raised in a workhouse, the hero is a natural gentleman. Writing in 1975, Roy Turnbaugh considers that the class system that runs throughout the empire is not challenged or disrupted, as 'the inherent superiority of the hero' is accepted by all those around him.²⁸ More recently, Aslami, by contrast, detects an 'enormous anxiety about the stability of the upper-class Britishness' through Henty's confusion of parentage and behaviour as the major determinant of heroic status.²⁹ Huttenback considers that for Henty 'the financial implication of imperial enterprise held no fascination' but this ignores the implicit and explicit expectations of the fictional characters, of the young readers lured towards service in the empire and of the remunerations of the popular author himself.³⁰ Dunae's work shows that 'the author was primarily interested in economic matters [...] anxious to promote commerce [...] and exploit the natural resources in Britain's imperial possessions'.³¹ Clark notes the hero's 'cheerful ruthlessness [in accepting] the subservience of the entire world to the economic and moral well-being of the English'.³² Certainly in *Herat*, the trading background of Angus Campbell facilitated his work as an agent for the British, providing both a useful disguise, and an authentic appreciation of price and value. In the world of the Great Game, security matters were the most valuable goods in which to trade.

What is noticeable is how the hero brings a curious absence to the heart of the stories. He (and with a few exceptions, it is always he) had, as Naidis writes, 'no real personality, but was, in fact, a kind of abstraction of pluck, physical endurance and

²⁸ Roy Turnbaugh, 'Images of Empire: George Alfred Henty and John Buchan', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 9.3 (Winter 1975), 734-740 (p.735).

²⁹ Aslami, (2012), pp.62-3.

³⁰ Robert A. Huttenback, 'G.A. Henty and the Vision of Empire', *Encounter*, 35.1 (July 1970), 46-53 (p.48).

³¹ Patrick Dunae, 'Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870-1914', *Victorian Studies*, 24.1 (Autumn 1980), 105-121 (p.110).

³² Gail Clark, 'Imperial Stereotypes: G.A. Henty and the Boys' Own Empire', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 18.4 (Spring 1985), 43-51 (p.49).

honour'.³³ The characters have few distinguishing traits, so 'there seem to be a great many of them, but I've sometimes thought there may only be two'.³⁴ Fenn admitted that 'characterisation [...] was not [Henty's] forte'.³⁵ From what Henty wrote about his own life as a special correspondent, he seems to have based his heroes on his own idealised self-image. The first of Henty's contributions appeared in the *Boy's Own Paper* of 6 June 1896. This three-part article, entitled 'Life of a Special Correspondent', listed the essential qualifications as including languages, military knowledge, 'the gift of vivid description', stamina and 'pluck [...] and, lastly, the manners of a gentleman, and the knack of getting on well with people of all ranks and classes'.³⁶

For Taylor, 'all the reader wanted was a slightly idealised version of himself', as 'developed characters would get in the way of the narrative'.³⁷ This blank, mirrored surface enabled readers, boys and girls, to place themselves within the story and use the empire as an 'imaginative arena within which English children of both sexes can experiment with power'.³⁸ There is no confusion or ambiguity about either the stage or the central player, in a scenario where 'his enemies and his duties are clearly defined, and courage alone can solve any problem'.³⁹ The empire, with all its vastness and its complexities, was reduced, according to Huttenback, to 'a sort of Darwinian laboratory' from which, once tested, the hero returned to 'the higher existence in Britain'.⁴⁰

This sense of the unreal, the theatricality of the scenes, even the mediocre dialogue, make the characters 'as cardboard as the figures children moved about the

³³ Mark Naidis, 'G.A. Henty's idea of India', *Victorian Studies*, 8.1 (September 1964), 49-58 (p.51).

³⁴ Samuel Crother, quoted in Dunae (1989), pp.18-19.

³⁵ Fenn, p.334.

³⁶ Henty, 'Life of a Special Correspondent', *Boy's Own Paper*, 6 June 1896, p.570.

³⁷ Quoted in J.S. Bratton, *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p.198.

³⁸ Deirdre H. McMahon, "'Quick, Ethel, your rifle!': Portable Britishness and flexible gender roles in G.A. Henty's books for boys', *Studies in the Novel*, 42.1&2 (Spring & Summer 2010), 154-72 (p.164).

³⁹ Turnbaugh, p.739.

⁴⁰ Huttenback, p.50.

stages of their paper theatres'.⁴¹ But this was perhaps the point of the formula, to enable children to inhabit the imaginative spaces of this fictional world, and practice a way of life essential to the maintenance of the imperial dream. All this could happen within the comforting walls of home and school. In fact Ingram posits that:

The Henty hero has never in fact left England. The foreign land he travels in, the vile climate he endures, the natives he manages: all of them exist in a daydream exactly opposite to Alice's nightmare. In Wonderland nothing is predictable; in Henty's world the hero is never taken by surprise.⁴²

I suggest that through his extensive use of the term 'hero' in his stories, Henty intentionally blurs the distinction between the boyish fictional protagonist (of various names but mostly of a single composite character), and the real-life figure (usually a military commander), whom the boy meets and wishes to impress. The surviving Blackie sales figures show that over their thirty-five years coverage, the most popular of his many titles were stories featuring military heroes from near-contemporary conflicts. Taking into account the increase in initial sales for later titles, that could be credited to Henty's growing status as a bestselling author, the highest first year sales were for his stories featuring Roberts, and other military leaders such as *With Buller in Natal* and *With Kitchener in the Soudan*, published between 1901-3, yet again demonstrating the Victorian enthusiasm for reading of great men. This factor may explain the comparative popularity of *Name to Herat* and *Campaigns*; the latter titles have higher first year sales but the interest tailed off rapidly, while the annual figures for *Name* average more than the other two combined. The Second Anglo-Afghan War was of great media interest, as demonstrated in the figures from *ILN*, and confirmed by *The Times*, whilst the

⁴¹ Ashley, quoted in Sinan Akilli, 'Spinning Yarns of imperial venture: G.A. Henty's promotion of British imperial ideology in African adventure novels', *Interactions* (Spring 2007), 1-15 (p.3).

⁴² Ingram, p.185.

campaigns of Chitral and Tirah (in *Campaigns*) had no equivalent following.⁴³ Roberts, commanding troops in Afghanistan and South Africa, provided a more compelling role model (and valuable brand name) in *Name* than any of the historical characters in *Herat*.

In his study of nine of Henty's stories set in the subcontinent, Mark Naidis notes how the thirty years of his authorship spans the era when India 'became a kind of symbol of British imperialism'.⁴⁴ Children of this generation were 'brought up on "Crimea" and "Mutiny" tales', inculcated with the drama of cavalry charges and lamp-lit hospitals, of greased cartridges and violent retribution.⁴⁵ These symbols may have functioned as the painted backdrop for the heroic exploits of his plucky protagonist, yet in using Afghanistan as a setting, I believe Henty was drawing other associations to the public consciousness: not only of battles and defeats, but of the Great Game, that amalgam of subterfuge and exploration, danger and imperial glory. Each main character in the four stories I consider here adopts a disguise, like the real-life spies and intelligence officers and the fictional characters in the Kipling stories of the following chapter, to cross the dangerous Frontier territories. This 'Tournament of Shadows' was so irresistible to young imaginations stifled by the dreary realities of school and domestic life, that Baden-Powell found it expedient to incorporate some of its essence into his Scouting movement, established in 1908. Through this wild country, with its echoes of Scott's romantic Celtic landscapes, Henty's heroes could be set against opponents for whom they could have a grudging admiration, opponents thereby made more worthy of the coming conflict, and ultimate British victory.

As with the Prince of Wales and his surmountable challenges on his tour of India, so for Henty's boy heroes there was nothing that could in the end disrupt or

⁴³ (See Appendix).

⁴⁴ Naidis, p.49. Naidis deals with nine titles including one of Henty's adult novels, *Rujub, the Juggler* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1893) but excludes two texts considered here, *Campaigns* and 'Daughter'.

⁴⁵ Holden Furber (1961), quoted in Naidis, p.49.

destabilise their position in the ruling line. They were victorious primarily because of their Britishness, contrasted against which 'almost all natives with the possible exception of the Sikhs and Afghans were essentially cowards [...] basically dishonest - to be trusted only watchfully'.⁴⁶ Henty has been condemned for his racial stereotyping, with many considering that he went far beyond the casual norms of his time, and was a cheerleader for a particularly unpleasant bigotry towards other races. His writings noticeably treat certain racial groups more harshly than others. Sinan Akilli notes his portrayal of Africans as feckless children, with their infants mistaken for baboons. Gail Clark, in her article on his imperial stereotypes, contrasts Henty's damning descriptions of American Indians, Haitian slaves and mulattoes with his more favourable treatment of certain racial groups, noting that he 'singles out for praise the same qualities in Afghans, Sikhs and Arabs - courage, pride, independence'; the very characteristics he valued in his Anglo-Saxon heroes.⁴⁷ The preface of *Name*, informs Henty's 'Dear Lads' that the strength of the Afghans lay 'in their personal bravery, their determination to preserve their freedom'.⁴⁸ He opined that once their weaknesses of disorganisation and impatience were subjected to the leadership of 'English officers there are no better soldiers in the world'.⁴⁹

For Name and Fame: or Through Afghan Passes

Name was the first Henty title set in Afghanistan, with a magazine serialisation starting in 1884 followed by book publication a year later.⁵⁰ Its focus on the recent events of the Second Anglo-Afghan War enabled Henty to connect with a war that had brought military success, individual heroism and widespread press publicity. It was his ninth title published by Blackie, but he was still not under a regular contract, which was

⁴⁶ Naidis, p. 57.

⁴⁷ Clark, p.45.

⁴⁸ *Name*, p.iii.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.iv.

⁵⁰ It appeared in *Routledge's Every Boy's Magazine* in twelve monthly instalments from October 1884.

only signed in April 1887, nearly two years after *Name* was published on 2 May 1885.⁵¹ In keeping with Blackie's tradition of giving the title page date as the year following, to help titles appear fresh for the peak Christmas selling period, the first edition is dated 1886. Henty had previously written stories set in the Indian subcontinent, with his 'Mutiny' tale, *In Times of Peril*, published in 1881 by Griffith and Farran, after being serialised in the *Union Jack*. Blackie's *With Clive in India*, published in September 1883, was a popular title, selling an average of nearly 1,000 copies a year at six shillings, and a further 1,300 per year at 3s.6d, according to Blackie's sales records, which run up to 1917. Where this title ran to 382 pages to justify its higher selling price, *Name* ends at page 352 and sold for five shillings. Writing to a specific word length was not difficult for Henty, who, like Kipling, was trained by his journalistic background to write to order. Butts has noted the 'extraordinary fact that of the sixty-nine full-length books Henty wrote for Blackie, thirty-six came to exactly 384 pages, and twenty-three reached exactly 352 pages', with only small variations in the length of the remainder.⁵² His publishers loved such precision, as the regular quantity kept the costs of production low, but it had a deleterious effect on the quality of his writing, as his phenomenal work rate and limited plot lines produced considerable repetition and unnecessary padding.

Name first met its reading public as twelve monthly instalments in the periodical *Routledge's Every Boy's Magazine* starting with the October 1884 issue. Blackie published it in book form in May 1885, before the serialisation had finished, in competition with the magazine for the lucrative Christmas trade, as Routledge planned

⁵¹ This contract, due to expire in April 1892, was superseded by a subsequent agreement dated 5 September 1891. This extended the word count of each book and increased the remuneration due to Henty, but more importantly it reflected the changed situation following the adoption of the International Copyright Act in 1891. This later contract listed the titles already in existence, detailed the royalties that would be paid to the author and set out the terms for titles published in America. Agreements transcribed in Newbolt, pp.654-658.

⁵² Dennis Butts, ed. *Rare Short Stories by G.A. Henty: Tales of Heroines and Heroes* (n.p.: Henty Society, 2003), p.158.

to bind the whole series into their *Every Boy's Annual 1886*, selling for six shillings in time for December 1885. The version was not illustrated, despite, as Newbolt has noted, the inclusion of illustrations being announced on the contents page of Routledge's annual. The Blackie volume, selling at five shillings, offered higher production values, with green, red and gold cloth boards, quality printing on good paper and eight full-page illustrations by Gordon Browne. Browne, who illustrated fourteen of Henty's titles, was one of the most prolific of Victorian illustrators and the son of 'Phiz', illustrator of many of Dickens's books.⁵³ *Name*, Henty's first Afghan book, was therefore aimed squarely at the same mass market as his other titles, using the standard processes and sales methods developed by Blackie to ensure a good return on their outlay.

The plot of *Name* follows the usual convolutions that enable Henty to move his hero away from the domestic setting and to the wild borderland, for the invasion of Afghanistan in October 1878. In England Tom Ripon, later renamed William Gale, is abducted as a small child by gypsies, but a fortuitous birthmark indicates an eventual reconciliation to restore his fortune and social standing. From the beginning he shows his natural breeding at the workhouse where he grows up, before being apprenticed to a fishing smack, surviving two shipwrecks, leading a counter-attack against a rival tribe on a desert island and outwitting ferocious pirates at sea. Fortuitously the donated library at the workhouse contained '*Robinson Crusoe*, *Midshipman Easy*, *Peter Simple*, three or four of Cooper's Indian tales, Dana's *Life before the Mast*, and several of Kingston's and Ballantyne's books' to supplement the syllabus of the schoolteacher (a bankrupt grocer) with useful survival skills and military tactics.⁵⁴ Although just sixteen years old when he arrives in Calcutta, William's story (told and retold with Henty's hallmark repetitions to bulk up the word count) impresses his hearers so much that he is

⁵³ Information on Henty's illustrators from John Cargill Thompson, *The Boys' Dumas: G.A. Henty: Aspects of Victorian Publishing* (Cheadle: Cancarnet Press, 1975), pp. 107-8.

⁵⁴ *Name*, p.35.

allowed to enlist in the Norfolk Rangers. Heeding the warning to 'say nothing about the workhouse [...] in the barrack-room', he travels towards the Frontier to join Roberts and his Kurram force in time for their advance into Afghanistan in November of 1878.⁵⁵ This was the third front of the invasion force aiming for Kabul, with Major General Donald Stewart attacking from Kandahar and Major General Samuel Browne leading the Khyber force via Jalalabad.

Far from being anywhere near the borders of Afghanistan when Roberts marched up the Kurram Valley towards Kabul, Henty was working at home on an earlier story, such as *The Young Buglers: A Tale of the Peninsular War*, perfecting his quick and focussed research, rapid dictation and cursory editing. Close reading of various titles has enabled critics to identify many of the sources for Henty's historical sections. In 1970 the historian Robert A. Huttenback commented on how Henty 'borrowed from the historians of the day with an abandon verging on outright plagiarism', including (for *The Young Buglers*) from Sir William Napier's *History of the War in the Peninsular*.⁵⁶ In 1972, David Gunby made a detailed reading of Henty's *Maori and Settler*, showing the 'wholesale' borrowing from both Gudgeon, and Henty's editor during his time on the *Standard*, J.E. Gorst.⁵⁷ Mark Naidis recorded a few of the 'specific allusions to his sources' that Henty provided for his Indian stories, and notes that he had access to 'scores of personal reminiscences, letters, and diaries' to complement these published accounts.⁵⁸

Having never been to Afghanistan, Henty could not rely on personal experience to fill in local details used in *Name*. From his travels accompanying the Prince of Wales to India in 1875-6, the closest he got to the Afghan border was Wazirabad, some 26

⁵⁵ *Name*, p.132.

⁵⁶ Huttenback, p.46.

⁵⁷ Gunby, p.4.

⁵⁸ Naidis, pp.55-56.

miles beyond Lahore.⁵⁹ He was no Sale, eyewitness and reporter from the Afghan passes, but, like Kaye, he was able to gain access to accounts before and beyond those in the public domain. By the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878), Henty's days as a special correspondent were over. This did not mean an end to his contacts with his former colleagues, as shown by his joint editing of the annual *Camps and Quarters* in 1889, with his fellow journalists Archibald Forbes of the *Daily News*, who had also been in the press corps on the royal visit to India, and Charles Williams, who had been editor of the *Evening Standard* before becoming a special correspondent for the paper.⁶⁰ Both had covered the first part of the Second Anglo-Afghan War from 1878-9, and Henty may well have had access to their published reports and personal anecdotes, garnered perhaps in the sociable surrounding of the Savage Club. Forbes, attached to the Khyber force, only published his dry, authoritative history of the First and Second Anglo-Afghan Wars in 1892, but may have shared his manuscript notes with his friend. Howard Hensman, correspondent for the *Daily News* and, like Kipling, the Allahabad *Pioneer*, published his account in 1881, so this could also have been available to Henty as he researched his story.⁶¹ In the few years between the end of the war and Henty's composition, a number of accounts written by both participants and observers were published, offering Henty further historical details to supplement his sources.

All of these may have contributed in some measure to Henty's work, but I have discovered a substantial and, characteristically, unacknowledged 'borrowing', concerning the battle of Peiwar Khotal, from General James Colquhoun's *With the*

⁵⁹ Kipling travelled closer to the Khyber pass when he reported on the 1885 Durbar as a special correspondent for the *Civil and Military Gazette*. (See following chapter).

⁶⁰ See Butts, p.5.

⁶¹ Archibald Forbes, *The Afghan Wars 1839-42 and 1878-80* (London: Seeley, 1892); Howard Hensman, *The Afghan War of 1879-80: Being a Complete Narrative of the Capture of Cabul, the Siege of Sherpur, the Battle of Ahmed Khel, the Brilliant March to Candahar, and the Defeat of Ayub Khan, With the Operations of the Helmund, and the Settlement With Abdur Rahman Khan* (London: Allen, 1881).

Kurram Field Force, 1878-79, published in 1881. This detailed record of the campaign under the command of Roberts is a rich source of political, ethnographical and topographical information, lists of regiments and stores, verbatim transcriptions of orders and battle reports, providing a clear narrative of the military advance on Kabul. Henty uses everything from the description of putties (then a new addition to the warm clothing supply) to the heliograph that enabled Roberts 'to flash the news of the successful capture of the enemy's first position to Brigadier General Cobbe'.⁶² As a sample, the following extracts compare on the left a paragraph from Colquhoun, and on the right, one from *Name*:

<p>The march had commenced at a little after 2 o'clock, but it was not till close upon 4 that the head of the column emerged from the forest on to the open slopes above the highest cultivated point in the Hurriab valley. The short December day was drawing to a close, no enemy was in sight, for the line of their retreat was hidden in the bed of the stream about a couple of miles further on, and no one knew then where they were to be found. The troops were quite exhausted, from want of rest and sheer fatigue, and were glad to receive the order to bivouac, even though they</p>	<p>In two hours the head of the column emerged from the forest on to the open slopes above the highest cultivated point in the Hurriab valley. It was now four o'clock. The short December day was drawing to a close; no enemy were in sight, for the line of their retreat was hidden in the bed of the stream a couple of miles further on, and no one knew where they were to be found. The troops were much exhausted with the want of rest and with their heavy work, for they had now been marching and fighting for eighteen hours and they were glad to receive the order to bivouac, although</p>
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⁶² J.A.S. Colquhoun, *With the Kurram Field Force, 1878-79* (London: Allen, 1881), pp.45, 107; *Name*, pp.151, 155.

had no tents or food, and though the	they had no tents or food, and the cold,
cold began to be penetrating, as might	as might be expected on a winter day at
have been expected on a winter's day at	an elevation of over 9,000 feet above the
an elevation of over 9,000 feet above	sea, began to be very severe. ⁶⁴
the sea. ⁶³	

At the successful capture of the strategic high ground of Peiwar Khotal, Henty borrows Colquhoun's vivid detail of the enemy camp, complete with pitched tents and cooked food abandoned in the haste of the rout. The Afghan gunners 'had left their silver-mounted brass helmets and forage caps, as well as their guns and carriages', all looted by the enthusiastic Turis, to the disgust of the British troops, who had to make do with any leftover spoils.⁶⁵ Whether such 'boiling down' came from Henty's dictation, buried deep in his sofa under a weight of 'prep' books, pipe-smoke and dogs, or from the useful Griffiths, with his shorthand and explicit instructions as to what he should crib, the ultimate responsibility rests with the author. The issue of plagiarism, although not unacknowledged at the time, may be a more modern concern, and certainly of more pertinence in the academic circles of literary criticism than in Henty's twofold enterprise, of persuading his 'Dear Lads' to read his books, and the dear parents, schools and libraries to buy them. Newbolt believes that had he 'written one of the classic masterpieces of children's literature' that had been directly plagiarised from another writer, the situation would be serious, but given the rapidity of production and Henty's functional reporter's style, he considers 'this kind of plagiarism is itself, perhaps, of small consequence'.⁶⁶ On the subject of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, so

⁶³ Colquhoun, p.116.

⁶⁴ *Name*, p.164.

⁶⁵ Colquhoun, p.125; *Name*, p.168.

⁶⁶ Newbolt, Editorial, *HSB*, No.6, p.2.

comparatively recent an event, the source material would be treated as contemporary news reports released without ownership, rather than copyrighted literary works.

The narrative of *Name* continues to the next field of battle, that of Ali Kheyl. William Gale is conveniently removed from the invading force by another of the author's familiar devices: that of being captured and held hostage, in this instance for the next four months, until the initial part of the campaign was over. This allowed Henty to briefly sketch out the movements of the other invading forces and, as Colquhoun's narrative ends with the British Envoy Louis Cavagnari's arrival at Kabul in July 1879, to select a different source to plagiarise, and a real life hero in Roberts for his readers to admire. Unlike the tall, broad-chested Gale, Roberts was a recognisable figure, described by an uncredited historian as 'a diminutive, red-faced, bandy-legged gamecock with the bearing of a lightning-rod'.⁶⁷ Returning to Kabul, to avenge the massacre at the Residency in which Cavagnari and his force of Guides were killed, Roberts then marched 320 miles to Kandahar in 20 days, to save the embattled garrison.⁶⁸

The legendary status Roberts achieved through these feats dampened his censure by the British press, who castigated him for his harsh treatment of prisoners at Ali Kheyl, and the vengeance he meted out in Kabul on the Residency's attackers. Even Henty, ever eager to associate his boy heroes with real-life ones, included reference to the escape attempt at Ali Kheyl that was frustrated 'only after several of the prisoners had been shot down'.⁶⁹ Colquhoun considered this 'a result which would have been arrived at without any loss of life had the prisoners listened to the instructions of the

⁶⁷ Quoted in D.S. Richards, *The Savage Frontier: A History of the Anglo-Afghan Wars* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2003), p.77.

⁶⁸ Roberts led his column through the Logar Valley, a slightly longer but better provisioned route, to relieve the garrison besieged at Kandahar, following their crushing defeat by the Afghans at Maiwand.

⁶⁹ *Name*, p.177.

native officer'.⁷⁰ Eighteen years later, Roberts defensively described it in his highly popular memoir as 'an unfortunate occurrence [...] which could hardly have been foreseen [...] and for which [...] no one was to blame'.⁷¹ Roberts claimed to have received orders for retribution to be exacted upon the buildings of Kabul, that would leave 'some mark that will not be easily obliterated', and upon those involved in Cavagnari's death, that would be 'swift, stern, and impressive [...] such as will be felt and remembered'.⁷² In Henty's semi-fictionalised account, it is the implacable armed hostility of the Afghans towards the British that 'General Roberts at last was obliged to punish [them] with severity'.⁷³ The single sentence reporting the connection between the attack on the Residency and the 'several executions [which] now took place' is elided with surrounding paragraphs detailing the immediate threat to the survival of Robert's force, as a result of which 'many of the villagers were also hung'.⁷⁴ In reality Roberts was forced to defend his conduct before a military commission, and blamed the media uproar in Britain on biased journalists and the gossip (in their letters home) of junior officers.⁷⁵ In his private correspondence with Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India, he drew explicit connections between events in the First and Second Anglo-Afghan Wars, touching on the circulation of news through private letters as discussed in chapter 1. Roberts claimed for himself the role of British hero, dutifully avenging an initial defeat:

I find that in the last Kabul War very similar accusations were made against the troops under the command of Sir George Pollock. There were no Press Correspondents in those days, and if young officers wrote as much then as they do now, their letters took longer to reach England, but there was the same outcry

⁷⁰ Colquhoun, p.204.

⁷¹ Fredrick Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India: from Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1879), II.161.

⁷² Roberts, II.231, 237.

⁷³ *Name* p.228.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pp.238, 239.

⁷⁵ T.A. Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars, 1839-1919* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2007), p.114.

about burning villages, shooting Afghans, etc. and both Generals Pollock and Nott had to defend themselves from attacks such as have been made on me.⁷⁶

Within six months, a remarkable march from Kabul to the besieged Kandahar (during which 10,000 men of the relief force under his command covered the 320 miles in twenty days) had restored Roberts' reputation. For this feat he was created a baronet, received awards and was thanked by a parliament who had shortly before been debating whether he was a war criminal.

If the relief of Kandahar made Roberts a suitable hero of recent events in Afghanistan for Henty to use in *Name*, then his involvement in the Second Boer War of 1899-1902 raised his standing even higher. Henty's *With Buller in Natal: or a Born Leader* had been rushed into print in 1900 and was his bestseller according to Blackie's records to 1917, with a first year's sales of over 17,000 copies.⁷⁷ Following the promptings of such sales figures for stories of contemporary military heroes, Henty wrote *With Roberts to Pretoria: a Tale of the South African War* (1901) and *With Kitchener in the Soudan: a Story of Atbara and Omdurman* (1902), respectively his second and third most popular titles in Blackie's sales ledgers. While these titles were in preparation, the publishers reissued *Name* with a rewritten preface by Henty and changes to the subtitle, binding and illustrations. Confusingly the subtitle on the cover read *With Roberts to Cabul*, the title page has *To Cabul with Roberts*, while the unchanged text retains the original *A Tale of the Afghan War*. The muddle over these changes, allied to what Newbolt considers 'the least effective of Blackie's usually very good designs' indicates the speed with which this edition was rushed out, to catch the

⁷⁶ Roberts to Lytton, Kabul, 14 February 1880, BL, Papers of 1st Earl of Lytton as Viceroy of India 1876-80, mss eur E218/39a, f.47, 209-217 (pp.209-10).

⁷⁷ Henty's contractual three books were already set up in type when, according to his own accounts, Blackie asked him to write a war story based on this on-going conflict. When asked 'How long can you give me?', he was told a month, and managed to produce the 140,000 words of *With Buller in Natal* within 24 days. Newbolt, p.556.

wave of popularity with which the conquering hero was greeted on his return from South Africa in 1901.⁷⁸ The price remained at five shillings and 1,947 copies were sold that year, four times as many as in the previous year. While Afghanistan continued to be almost overlooked in *ILN*, with hits in single figures over the turn of the century, the theme of the Second Anglo-Boer War with its 'Transvaal War' supplements in 1900, and the Special Number on General Roberts in 1901 (with dramatic illustrations depicting his involvement in the 'Mutiny' and Second Anglo-Afghan War), gives a compelling reason for Henty and Blackie to capitalise on Robert's fame with this reprint.⁷⁹

To Herat and Cabul: a Story of the First Afghan War

Herat was published in June 1901 to retail at five shillings. It appeared (perhaps as a warning against complacency and unpreparedness in imperial military matters) between his two Anglo-Boer war stories, the highly popular *With Buller in Natal* and *With Roberts to Pretoria*, whose contemporary subject matter and titular heroes more than doubled *Herat's* first year sales, and nearly quadrupled its average annual sales to 1917, indicating an unwarranted optimism in booksellers in their pre-publication orders for *Herat*.⁸⁰ Featuring historical characters such as Eldred Pottinger and Alexander Burnes, and events such as the siege, retreat and captivity, *Herat* suggests the extent to which the narrative of the First Anglo-Afghan War had entered public consciousness, while its indifferent sales indicate a preference for reading of victories rather than defeats.

The hero Angus Campbell grows up in Scotland whilst his parents live in Herat, one of his school's 'healthy and somewhat riotous lads' full of 'mischief [...] good health

⁷⁸ Newbolt, p.128.

⁷⁹ *ILN* printed two supplements on the Transvaal War in the 13 January and 5 November 1900 issues and a Special Number on Roberts in the 5 January 1901 issue.

⁸⁰ First year sales of 17,342 and 15,433 respectively, as against *Herat's* 7,033; average yearly sales (excluding first year) of 529 and 519, as against 142. Newbolt, p.663.

and [...] good spirits [who] is far more likely to turn out well than one who spends all his time in poring over his books'.⁸¹ Here is a more active, outdoors childhood than that circumscribed by the walls of the workhouse, where Will Gale's reward was access to the second-hand books in the library.⁸² Henty's anti-intellectualism is given freer rein, a reflection of his own public school education of the 1840s and 50s, influenced by the reforms of Thomas Arnold at Rugby in the 1830s.⁸³ What Mangan refers to as the public schools' 'secular trinity [of] imperialism, militarism, and athleticism' strongly summarises the Henty ideology.⁸⁴ Book learning for its own sake, or the standard schooling in 'dead languages [and] mathematics', were treated with disdain in Henty's stories, where even the possible utility of these subjects for passing exams, as debated at length by the Babu Hurree Chunder Mookerjee in Kipling's *Kim*, was ignored.⁸⁵ Henty's heroes do not need to pass exams, for they circumvent the regular routes to enlistment and promotion with their natural courage and leadership skills, honed through athletic, hard-played games and imaginations sharpened with exciting adaptations of history such as those interlaid in his adventure stories.

Where the 'dead' languages of Latin and Greek were ignored, the 'live' and useful ones of Persian and Arabic were counted essential for the young Angus when he rejoins his parents at Herat: 'until you speak Persian fluently you will be of no use whatever to me [and] Arabic is essential to trade'.⁸⁶ Angus arrives back in Herat as a twelve-year-old scallywag, but by the time his parents die of the plague, he has developed into a sixteen-year-old linguist with a trader's mind and a facility with disguises. Like the eponymous hero of Kipling's *Kim*, published in the same year, he is perfectly placed to

⁸¹ *Herat*, p.12-13.

⁸² *Name*, p.36.

⁸³ Akilli, p.6.

⁸⁴ Mangan, p.324.

⁸⁵ *Name*, p.277; Rudyard Kipling *Kim*, (London: Macmillan, 1901) pp.229-233.

⁸⁶ *Herat*, p.14. Such languages retain their utility in the British Army today.

be of use in the business of gathering information.⁸⁷ Like Dravot (as opposed to Carnehan) in 'The Man who would be King', he 'learned their lingo' and by command of language improves his command of situations.⁸⁸

The inherent sense of command Henty gave his boy heroes, did not permit them to interfere with the course of historical events. Gunby, in his study of Henty's plagiarism, credits this to the author's 'near reverential treatment of historical fact'.⁸⁹ Thus the borrowings, inserted by his amanuenses at his instruction, were maintained as a hero-free zone, allowing 'the 'real' heroes [to be] given the glory'.⁹⁰ In *Herat* there are three instances where Angus was imprisoned and thus denied direct involvement in historical events. I have closely compared Henty's accounts at these three points with those of Kaye's *History* to ascertain whether Kaye was one of his sources. Angus's first period of captivity was before the fall of Ghuznee, where he was locked into a small room with only a loophole window giving a partially obscured view of the advance of the British under Sir John Keane, with the sounds of the night-time attack on the fort muffled by the gale. The details of the successful taking of Ghuznee are therefore free of the involvement of the fictional hero. The historical events that Henty or Griffiths 'boiled down' for this particular section of the story were not based directly on Kaye's *History*, but subsequent passages yield more similarities.⁹¹

His new Afghan friend and servant, Azim, whose life Angus has recently saved, arranges the second imprisonment.⁹² With the imminent attack on Burnes widely

⁸⁷ *Kim* was serialised in America in *McClure's Magazine* from December 1900 - October 1901 and in Britain in *Cassell's* from January - November 1901. The book was published in both countries in October 1901.

⁸⁸ Kipling, 'The Man Who Would Be King', (ed. Montefiore, 2011), p.117.

⁸⁹ Gunby, p.5.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Compare *Herat's* account pp.154-163 with that of Kaye's *History*, 4th ed., 3 vols (London: Allen, 1890), i.456-468. My comparison of the texts involved suggests that Henty used this edition.

⁹² That he was called Sadut Khan may be a further example of borrowing from Kaye, who noted a meeting of Macnaghten with assembled tribal heads at the house of Sydat Khan the night before Burnes' death, ii.167.

anticipated, Angus and Azim are snatched off the street and deposited in a comfortable but securely barred room from which they could clearly hear, but not see, the gunfire and the shouting. This proves no impediment to Angus's commentary on the action, and his explanations to Azim intersperse the unfolding narrative. Here evidence of borrowings from Kaye is strong in details such as the early morning warning from a friendly Afghan, and the coincidence of the anniversary of Purwundurrah, where Lieutenant Broadfoot's brother had been killed. In describing Burnes' desperate calls for support to Macnaghten, and to the local chief promising to address all the people's grievances, Kaye wrote that 'only one of the messengers returned. He brought back nothing but wounds. The message had cost the other his life', where Henty wrote less poetically that 'one of the messengers was killed on the way, the other managed to return to the house desperately wounded'.⁹³

For the third capture, Angus and Azim are taken as they left Kabul on a forlorn mission to get a message through to General Sale at Jalalabad. Even as he is bundled in blankets and tied up, 'the affair reminded [Angus] of his friendly capture at Cabul', and Azim later admits what the reader already knows; that he has arranged it so they would escape certain death in the retreat through the passes.⁹⁴ Held at various huts some miles distance from the retreat, yet moving to follow its dreadful progress, they are helpless but observant 'spectators of this massacre'.⁹⁵ The historical narrative shadows Kaye's *History* as surely as Angus shadows the unfolding disaster, with page after page catching at the sequence of events, the details, words and phrases from fifty years before, but 'boiled' to remove all piquancy. Despite his readers castigating Henty for the tedium of the 'solid chunks of history' he inserted into his adventures, there are clear instances where more respectful trust of his source material could have repaid him with

⁹³ *History*, (1890), II.170; *Herat*, p.233.

⁹⁴ *Herat*, p.271.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p.282.

a more vibrant account. In attempting to make history more exciting, Henty inadvertently left it a shadow of its true self. As an example, compare the detail of the Sepoys throwing away their guns: on the left, the original extract by Kaye ('boiled' or collated from his own sources) and on the right, Henty's version from *Herat*:

The Native regiments were fast melting into nothing. Throwing down their arms and crowding in among the mass of camp-followers, the Sepoys were rapidly swelling the disorganised rabble in front. Their hands were frost-bitten; they could not pull a trigger; they were paralysed, panic-struck; they rushed forward in aimless desperation, scarcely knowing what they did or where they went.⁹⁶

The Sepoys had already lost the greater portion of their numbers; the remainder threw away their guns, which they could no longer use owing to their hands being frost-bitten, and joined the disorganised rabble in front.⁹⁷

The plagiarism was not without errors; whether due to Griffiths' transcription or Henty rapid proof reading, a small typo crept into the text. With reference to Pollock's leadership of the Army of Retribution, Kaye wrote that 'the *morale* of the Sepoys had greatly improved'.⁹⁸ Keeping the original italic typescript, Henty noted that 'the *moral* of the Sepoys was now completely restored', downgrading military discipline and confidence to a concern for behavioural ethics.⁹⁹

By the time Henty wrote *Herat*, the source material he needed for the historical foundations of his story was easily available, but it is worth considering whether other

⁹⁶ *History*, (1890), II.377.

⁹⁷ *Herat*, p.277.

⁹⁸ *History*, (1890), III.88.

⁹⁹ *Herat*, p.308.

factors motivate this choice of subject matter. The military and political blunders of the conflict became a matter of national disgrace, and throughout his *History*, Kaye castigated the 'misdirection and mismanagement' that led to 'the awful completeness [...] of this Caubul tragedy'.¹⁰⁰ Henty's preface followed Kaye's severe line, thundering that 'of all the wars in which our troops have taken part never was one entered upon so recklessly or so unjustifiably'.¹⁰¹ The 'disaster', such a 'dark and disgraceful [...] shame', may also refer to a different conflict that had strongly affected Henty. As critics have explored the extent to which Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) was a sublimated response to the Indian 'Mutiny', so the 'shame' of the losses in Afghanistan in *Herat* may be a substitute for the humiliating defeat, which, in 1881, ended the First Anglo-Boer War.¹⁰² An anecdote from his colleague Edward Downey illustrates its effect on Henty:

Henty was the most Imperialist of all the Imperialists I ever encountered. I remember well the day when the news of Majuba Hill reached London. Henty appeared at Catherine Street a little later than his usual hour. 'Have you heard this awful news?' he asked me as he arrived in the office. And then the big man burst into tears. 'The disgrace can never be wiped out,' he blubbered. 'Never! Never!'¹⁰³

The emotions of Henty the Imperialist swung from blubbering over Majuba in 1881 to 'mafficking' (celebrating extravagantly and publicly) over the lifting of the siege of Mafeking in 1900. I suggest that in writing about the 'Disasters' in *Herat*, Henty transferred his strong reactions to an earlier defeat from South Africa to Afghanistan, in

¹⁰⁰ *History*, (1890), II.390.

¹⁰¹ *Herat*, p.v.

¹⁰² Dickens had a horror of mob rule and feared for the safety of his son Walter, newly embarked on his journey to India before news of the 'Mutiny' broke. On this aspect of Dickens' work, see William Oddie, 'Dickens and the Indian Mutiny', *Dickensian*, 68 (January 1972), 3-15 and *Literature and Nation: Britain and India 1800-1990*, ed. by Richard Allen and Harish Trivedi (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.58-60.

¹⁰³ Downey, p.116.

the hope that the Second Anglo-Boer War would, like the Second Anglo-Afghan War, prove to be a victorious counterweight.

Through Three Campaigns: a Story of Chitral, Tirah and Ashantee

Campaigns, published posthumously in May 1903, provided an uneasy collection of two battles on the Afghan Frontier (1895 and 1897) with the final stages of the conflict over control of the West African Gold Coast (1900). These engagements were selected, according to Henty's preface, because 'our little wars attract far less attention [...] than they deserve' yet demonstrate 'valour and determination worthy of the highest praise'.¹⁰⁴ Chitral and Tirah took place after Roberts (by then Earl Roberts of Kandahar) had left India, but his popular autobiography *Forty-One Years in India* was a publishing success when it appeared in 1897, coinciding with public interest in the Afghan Frontier.¹⁰⁵

The *TLS* review of Christmas books for 1903, reminded readers that books demonstrate 'that Mr Henty was always well in advance of his publishers'.¹⁰⁶ The review kept carefully to a brief description of the story, with the unenthusiastic comment that Lisle Bullen, the main character, 'has the usual good luck of Henty's young heroes'.¹⁰⁷ Later opinions of *Campaigns* have been more forthright, with Arnold judging it to be 'possibly Henty's worst book'.¹⁰⁸ A member of the Henty Society (and presumably an admirer), writing of the titles he had abandoned before finishing, described *Campaigns* as 'among the worst of the lot [with] great chunks of undigested military history like

¹⁰⁴ *Campaigns*, preface.

¹⁰⁵ My copy (1897), originally sold by a bookseller in Simla, lists fourteen editions produced in the first two months of publication, and a braille edition in press, indicating the phenomenal public interest in Roberts. For further discussion on the popularity of this top-selling memoir, see Troy J. Bassett and Christina M. Walter, 'Booksellers and Bestsellers: British Book Sales as Documented by *The Bookman*, 1891-1906', *Book History*, 4 (2001), 205-236.

¹⁰⁶ *TLS*, 27 November 1903, p.344.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Arnold, p.112.

butcher's plums in a poorly made duff' concluding in loud capitals 'IT IS TERRIBLE'.¹⁰⁹ Unusually for Henty, and to his credit, he at least acknowledged the historical sources he has 'boiled down' in the preface, and, whilst he had no direct experience of Chitral and Tirah, he had accompanied Sir Garnet Wolseley during the Ashanti campaign in 1873 as special correspondent. Of the titles here discussed, this is certainly the least interesting, most perfunctorily written collation of disparate parts, with frequent repetitions and digressions to pad out the word count, including bizarre discussions on expanding waistlines, tinned soup, and whether it would be better to 'pick up a wife with money' or live as a clubbable bachelor.¹¹⁰ Lisle is a hero so smug, so full of the 'positively nauseating [...] piety' common in Henty's heroes, that amongst the numerous name-checked weaponry, of Martinis and muskets, Maxims, Lee-Metfords and Sniders, I harboured a secret longing for a better marksman amongst the enemy forces.¹¹¹

Sixteen-year-old Lisle Bullen, orphaned by his father's death, is due to be sent from the regimental cantonment in the Afghan Frontier to his uncle in England. He instead employs the tactics of Kipling's Kim and, darkening his skin with a bottle of stain, joins the regiment in the guise of a sepoy to take part in the Chitral Expedition of 1895. His heroic actions, excellent marksmanship and general popularity result in firstly the sepoys, then the British officers, all becoming aware of who he is, although everyone was prepared to keep the 'secret' until Lisle himself inadvertently reveals his true identity. Once the besieged British force at Chitral has been relieved, Lisle is feted as a hero and allowed to join as an officer.

The middle third of the book covers the Tirah Campaign of 1897, with Lisle captured, escaping, promoted, captured again and so impressing his captors with his

¹⁰⁹ J.W. Doupe, 'G.A. Henty and some of his successors', *HSB*, 6 (December 1978), p.8.

¹¹⁰ His friend Hallett expressed a preference for the latter: 'There you meet fellows you know, lie against each other about past campaigns, eat capital dinners, and have your rub of whist, regularly, of an evening.' *Campaigns*, p.292.

¹¹¹ Arnold, p.108.

courage that he is released and escorted back to his regiment, where these events are related at considerable length to his comrades. After recuperation in England following a bad case of sunstroke (caught during a cricket match at Rawalpindi), Lisle travels to West Africa for the final campaign of the Anglo-Ashanti War in 1900. With Colonel Willcock's force, Lisle and his friend Hallett march inland to relieve the besieged fort of Kumasi, earning praise and medals for his bravery. This third section of the book is the longest, and the description of the surroundings more convincing than the earlier Afghan Frontier sections, showing the benefits of Henty's first-hand experience of the country as a special correspondent.

Perhaps due more to Henty's death than the quality of the work (selling at six shillings), the first year sales reached 9,013, although that dropped to an average of 192 per year for the following eight years. In 1912 it was reissued in the 'New and Popular Edition' at 3/6, selling a further 2,778 copies before records ceased.¹¹² The lower sales figures must, of course, be considered in the light of the relatively short time scale between publication and the records falling silent, but provide enough evidence to show that this was far from Henty's most popular title. This may be due to the rather desultory grouping of the three conflicts, or the lack of a heroic figure in the mould of Roberts, Kitchener, Clive or Wellington, but like the 'little wars' themselves of which Henty wrote, this book was destined to 'attract far less attention amongst people of this country' than Henty himself thought it deserved.¹¹³ This echoes the falling interest in Afghanistan, with minor persistent border skirmishes and no major newsworthy conflict, as three decades pass from 1897-1927 with only three disparate years where the hits in *ILN* reach double figures. Comparative figures from *The Times* show that following a peak of interest in Afghanistan due to critical tensions over Herat in 1885

¹¹² Summarised analysis of sales figures in Newbolt, p.662.

¹¹³ *Campaigns*, preface.

(656 hits), annual figures were in double figures or the low one-hundreds until the royal visit to Britain in 1928 (330). By 1896 the *Daily Mail* adds another comparator to my research figures, where the royal visit of 1928 (337 hits) breaks the usual double or single figure tally.

A Soldier's Daughter

As Newbolt's extensive bibliographical study concentrates on Henty's British editions, information regarding Colonial sales are not available for discussion here, but his stories were certainly well placed to inculcate the values of Britain and her empire in families living overseas. The golden romance side of Andrew Lang's literary shield appealed particularly to young British readers living in the colonies, where girls as well as boys enjoyed their fiction replete with 'bloodcurdling' adventure stories and 'hair-breadth escape'.¹¹⁴ That Henty's books were marketed almost exclusively for boys would not have prevented them being read and enjoyed by the sisters of 'Dear Lads', and the short story 'Daughter' was aimed specifically at girl readers.

Henty's final story set on the Afghan frontier did not appear in Blackie's sales ledger at all. 'Daughter' was first posthumously serialised in *The Girl's Realm* in three parts from May to July 1903. McMahon considers it his only work written 'expressly for a female audience', yet his earlier tale, 'A Frontier Girl', was published in the same magazine in 1901.¹¹⁵ In both settings, the American West and the Indian North West, Henty clearly envisioned young women responding to the needs of empire with level heads, steady trigger fingers and (where needed) a facility with racial cross-dressing disguises. 'Daughter' appeared in book form as *A Soldier's Daughter and other stories* published by Blackie in June 1905. This brief miscellany contained the title story that

¹¹⁴ Constance A. Barnicoat, 'The Reading of the Colonial Girl', *Nineteenth Century*, 60 (1906), 939-50 (p.943).

¹¹⁵ McMahon, p.168.

ran to 106 pages, followed by 'How Count Conrad von Waldensturm took Goldstein' (55 pages) and 'A Raid by the Blacks' (26 pages). The novelty of the story lies in the gender of the 'hero', sixteen-year-old Nita, whose life at a remote Frontier fort with her father, Major Ackworth, is about to be disrupted. She is due to be sent 'home' to finishing school, as the accomplishments she has so far acquired were 'not strictly feminine in their character', comprising of shooting, fencing, cricket and boxing.¹¹⁶ She may wish to be a boy but her father claims her prowess with a pistol will be of future use, as 'it is more than probable that you will be a soldier's wife [and] you remember in the mutiny how women fought at the side of their husbands'.¹¹⁷ This role set out for Nita combines the traditions of domesticity with what McMahon regards as the promise of 'agency to the female reader' in a scenario where to be European, and especially British, provides a stronger basis for appropriate behaviour 'than solely on sex or age'.¹¹⁸ Rosemary George portrays the figure of the memsahib as an 'authoritative self' of more power and independence than her sisters living at 'Home', as imperial discourse places greater emphasis on race and skin colour than on gender and capital.¹¹⁹

No historical 'butcher's plums' interrupt this story.¹²⁰ The father is removed from the fort to chase a raiding party, leaving the young Lieutenant Carter in charge. When the fort is subsequently attacked, Nita changes into soldier's uniform and fights alongside him. They are both overpowered and taken hostage, without their Afghan captors realising her true identity: the wife of the Afridi chief expresses surprise that such a 'slight boy should be an officer', to which the chief responds 'they are strange people these men, but they are men, and these fought like lions'.¹²¹ Nita herself cannot

¹¹⁶ 'Daughter', p.9.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid* p.10.

¹¹⁸ McMahon, p.166.

¹¹⁹ Rosemary Marangoly George, 'Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home', *Cultural Critique*, 26 (Winter 1993-4), 95-127, (p.97).

¹²⁰ Doupe, p.8.

¹²¹ 'Daughter', p.56.

understand this exchange, but within a couple of pages picks up the language sufficiently to overhear useful information. This enables her to devise a plan of escape, leading Carter on the long and dangerous journey back to the fort. She proves resourceful in provisioning their escape, stealing food, pony and a rifle. Acknowledged as the better shot, she carries the superior Lee-Metford gun, leaving Carter to manage as best he can with the inferior Martini. Henty ensures that Nita speaks deferentially to Carter, constantly putting herself under his authority and protection, in an attempt to counterweigh her obvious survival skills.

Nita demonstrates the unusual convolutions Henty went through to have the attributes of 'pluck and good spirits' combine with a lethally accurate shot in a female of the species, yet still ensure that the (male) soldier who accompanies her does not lose his superior status. As she escapes, she steals clothing from her captor and 'hesitated a good deal whether she should adopt a male or female dress' (there was, of course, no question of Carter being disguised as a woman), before choosing to continue as a man, exchanging the British uniform for the attire of an Afridi tribesman.¹²² That the people they meet instantly see through their racial disguise and attack them, is less important in this story than the gender issues that are raised. Here the wearing of man's clothing acts as a protection for Nita, in contrast to the experience of Sale, shot in the arm during the retreat because she was mistaken for a man in her officer's forage cap.¹²³

Nita is an example of one of the 'empowered colonial subjects' in Rosemary George's *The Politics of Home*, replicating the domestic sphere in a new imperial location, as the role of female homemaker is elided with the masculine role of imperial

¹²² 'Daughter', p.63.

¹²³ [Anderson], *Bentley's Miscellany*, p.141. The women captives were told to wear turbans and cloaks to disguise themselves and avoid being abused as foreigners while being moved between forts.

housekeeper.¹²⁴ Nita's drawing room, where she originally entertains Carter, is a military fort; she uses her captor's home as her dressing room and larder; and a rocky outcrop is transformed into her kitchen and dining room.¹²⁵ It is as well that, having emasculated Carter with her marksmanship, he is empowered to wield a carving knife. Having acted the hunter-gatherer while she lights a fire, Nita secures him in the traditional male role by asking him to prepare the 'prime joint of beef' as 'I have never done any work of that sort [and] should make a very poor hand at it'.¹²⁶

Carter is allowed a surreptitious wooing of Nita, in an echo of the close friendships of Will and Yussouf in *Name*, Angus and Azim in *Herat*, or Lisle and Hallet in *Campaigns*, declaring that despite the strangeness of 'a young man and a girl thus wandering about together, yet it has scarcely felt strange to me [and] our companionship has been a very pleasant one'.¹²⁷ While Nita agrees that it had been 'a jolly time' she is more concerned with 'how disgusting it will be to have to put on girl's clothes again'.¹²⁸ Her wearing of Carter's spare uniform during the initial attack on the fort is an acceptable response to the level of risk at the time, but her return to the regiment brings a return to more traditional roles, with the declaration that she 'should not like to be seen wearing a man's uniform here', though whether this was to avoid gender confusion, or out of respect for the military, is unclear.¹²⁹ It is not only a chore to put women's clothes on, she has first to sew them, as there are none in the camp. Perhaps it is the rapid stitching rather than the loss of cross-dressing that prompts her to complain of feeling 'horribly uncomfortable in these clothes [...] they seem to cling about me in a

¹²⁴ Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-century Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), pp.199, 5.

¹²⁵ 'Daughter', pp.19, 63, 74-5.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, pp.75-76.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p.103.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, pp.103, 104.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p.110.

most disagreeable way'.¹³⁰ Arnold, reflecting the views of his generation, comments on Nita's eventual marriage to Carter, that 'the reader has no doubts as to who will wear the trousers'.¹³¹ According to McMahon, Nita 'represents Henty's ideal daughter of empire', who should return home from the colonies 'to inhabit women's silent place in domesticity'.¹³² Unlike the women captives from the First Anglo-Afghan War, this fictional character has no hypothetical account to publish, and, unlike the loquacious Sale, she becomes 'timid and embarrassed' when her part in their adventures is discussed.¹³³ She falls completely silent when, following two years schooling in England, she returns to marry Carter and the story ends with a valorisation of his talents, his promotions, his income: it is *his* life that 'bids fair to be a perfectly bright and happy one'.¹³⁴

Reader Reception

There was, and still is, considerable debate amongst critics as to Henty's artistic merit. Even his supporters acknowledged that his books lacked 'that unknown quality [...] which causes the British public to go reading mad'.¹³⁵ Roger Lancelyn Green observed that 'the trouble with Henty is that he never produced a masterpiece; he was not inspired to write anything'.¹³⁶ These words demonstrate the concerns of the critic with literary style, a value placed on the fine turn of phrase and a careful aesthetic construction to bring joy to the heart of the high priests of Bloomsbury. Henty never tried to produce such work: his career as a journalist and the rapid way the books were created left no time for such niceties, even if he cared about them. A.J.P. Taylor

¹³⁰ 'Daughter', p.111.

¹³¹ Arnold, p.113.

¹³² McMahon, p.169.

¹³³ 'Daughter', p.113.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p.113.

¹³⁵ Fenn, p.331.

¹³⁶ Roger Lancelyn Green, *Teller of Tales* (London, 1969) p.80, quoted in Dunae (1989) p.20.

declared that 'Henty never aspired to be a "writer". He was merely doing an artisan's job. That won him 25 million readers. Probably it also deprived him of immortality'.¹³⁷

Whether dismissed as 'trash merchant' or praised for 'nurturing in later generations a spirit that sustained Britain through two world wars', Henty's books had a lasting influence.¹³⁸ Kipling's readers were, for his earlier writings, adults with adult discernments, but Henty grabbed them young and only partly formed. For this juvenile audience it did not matter that:

your writings may be slovenly, your facts may be all wrong, your invention may be poor - you may in fact possess every fault which the critics deplore - but if you have the spirit of romance within you [...] you need not despair of winning the support and affection of the great boy-public.¹³⁹

Perhaps this was why those such as ex-history teacher Robert Stopford, Bishop of London from 1961-1973, could confess in the House of Lords in 1963 'that after fifty years he had still not got G.A. Henty quite out of his system'.¹⁴⁰ Geoffrey Trease, who quotes Stopford, wrongly considered that the expiry of copyright on Henty's books in 1952 'will hardly cause the most vulturine of publishers to swoop'.¹⁴¹ In fact some forty titles were reprinted during the 1960s, and today there is a burgeoning market in reprints for the U.S. home-schooling market, attracted by 'their educational value, but also for their unswerving moralism'.¹⁴² Advertisements on websites offering sets of 120 Henty titles promote them as the means whereby a young boy (almost inevitably a boy):

¹³⁷ *Observer*, 13 April 1980.

¹³⁸ Dunae (1983) p.147.

¹³⁹ Ralph Rollington [John Allingham] *A Brief History of Boys' Journals* (Leicester, 1913), p.89, quoted in Dunae (1989), p.31.

¹⁴⁰ Geoffrey Trease, *Tales Out of School* (1948; London: Heinemann, 1964), p.14.

¹⁴¹ Geoffrey Trease, quoted in Arnold, p.175.

¹⁴² Brooke Allen, p.23.

will travel back in time to some of the greatest events in Western civilization [...] Most importantly, he will see the world through the lens of biblical Christianity. In this world, he will learn that men are to live a life of duty and sacrifice, and that God requires even little boys to act with nobility.¹⁴³

With the sale of 40, 70 or even 120 volume sets through such websites, it is salutary to remember that not every reader accepted that Henty was 'part of the avowed as well as the hidden curriculum for the sons of the British Empire'.¹⁴⁴ Conservative, home-schooled, twenty-first century readers are believers in an American empire that is involved in its own Afghan War. As Jonathan Rose has noted, even during Henty's peak of popularity, not every boy would have been interested in reading imperial fiction, as the majority of late nineteenth and early twentieth century British youths were 'working class, and [...] acutely unaware of their empire' except for the intense 'outbursts of jingoism during the First World War'.¹⁴⁵ Fictional readers demonstrate that the excitement of Henty's adventures could pall. Henty became, by the time of the First World War, symbolic of a childhood that had passed into history itself. Rudyard Kipling marked the death of the energetic young Wyndham Fowler, at the start of the First World War, by having Mary Postgate (companion to his aunt) incinerate his childhood toys and books, including his 'thumbed and used Hentys'.¹⁴⁶ In Compton Mackenzie's two-volume *Bildungsroman* of 1913 and 1914, *Sinister Street*, Michael Fane's boyish fascination with Henty's stories faded as he moved from junior to senior school:

¹⁴³ < <http://www.visionforum.com/browse/product/70-volume-ga-henty-library/?cid=319&search=henty&sortby=0> [accessed 22 February 2011].

¹⁴⁴ Bratton, p.206.

¹⁴⁵ Jonathan Rose, 'Rereading the English common reader: A preface to a history of audiences' in Finkelstein and McCleery, 324-339 (p.334).

¹⁴⁶ Kipling, 'Mary Postgate', *The Man Who Would Be King*, (ed. Montefiore, 2011), p.434. First published in *Nash's Magazine*, September 1915.

When Michael was at home, he took a new volume of Henty into the garden and began to read. Suddenly he found he was bored by Henty. This knowledge shocked him for the moment. Then he went indoors and put *For Name and Fame*, or *Through Afghan Passes* back on the shelf. He surveyed the row of Henty's books gleaming with Olivine edges, and presently he procured brown paper and with Cook's assistance wrapped up the dozen odd volumes. At the top he placed a slip of paper on which was written 'Presented to the Boys' Library by C.M.S. Fane.'¹⁴⁷

In clearing his shelves, there is an unconscious echo of the well-meaning ladies who supplied Will's workhouse with reading material in *Name*. Not only was the title Michael discarded the main subject of this chapter, but it was a 'new volume', not one of the numerous and heavily thumbed titles in his Henty collection that had sustained him through the tedium of earlier school holidays.

The popularity of Henty's books relied more upon the choice of historical figure than on the historical period or geographical setting, so the author's lack of first-hand knowledge did not of itself harm his sales figures when writing about Afghanistan, which he treated as a backdrop against which his British heroes could prove their superiority. If Henty 'treated India as a synecdoche for the British Empire', then how much more was the British character tested and confirmed in Afghanistan, a place teetering on the edge of the unknown worlds.¹⁴⁸ This perhaps was the nub of the lack of interest in the later Afghan-set stories he wrote; with *Name* it was the combination of recent events, a 'blockbuster' war that had been widely discussed in the papers, and a popular real-life hero, that provided Henty with sufficient material to carry his rather pedestrian fictional padding. Where events were neither sufficiently current nor vivid in

¹⁴⁷ Compton Mackenzie, *Sinister Street*, 2 vols (London: Martin Secker, 1913-14) 1.207.

¹⁴⁸ Ralph Crane and Lisa Fletcher, 'Picturing the Empire in India: Illustrating Henty', *English Literature in Translation*, 55.2 (2012) 155-75, p.161.

the public imagination, as shown by the desultory hit rate in the *ILN*, it was his want of imagination rather than his adherence to history that resulted in the comparative lack of success of his later Afghan Frontier stories.

The 'Dear Lads' who comprised the main demographic of his readers appreciated his books during their youth, and many claimed to have had their view of historical events irredeemably imprinted by Henty's stories. A generation later such boys would likely be reading W.E. Johns' adventures of the Indian-born British flying ace 'Biggles'. Yet the pedestrian style and flattened narrative that Henty produced holds little charm for the questioning child or piquancy for the satiated adult reader. After Michael Fane had cleared his bookshelves of Henty, he fell back upon *Don Quixote* with his imagination 'primed for strange emotions'.¹⁴⁹ As the strong historical narrative of Sale and Kaye had been muffled by Henty's indiscriminate borrowings and awkward plotting, then perhaps Afghanistan could be redeemed in the literary imagination as a fantasy site, a dangerous playground, best created in imaginative literature.

In the next chapter I consider whether Kipling's looser connection to historical and factual accuracy ultimately makes for a more satisfying and convincing portrayal of Afghanistan than Henty's didactic approach and stolid heroes. With his canny mixture of knowing literary winks and layered evasions, Kipling's imaginative world, with its strange brotherhood of loafers, miscreants and outsiders, invites the reader to share his arcane secrets and insider knowledge. Of higher literary status than Henty, his use of Afghanistan as a setting and background theme in his most enduring stories is a central factor in tracing the trajectory of this thesis. He continues to retain an enthusiastic readership into the 2010s, across many paper, film, audio and digital eBook formats, as shown by data extracted from the Amazon figures.

¹⁴⁹ Mackenzie, p. 207.

Kings of Kafiristan: Kipling's Border-Crossings.

Thus far in my thesis I have tracked the close correlation between the historical conflicts of British incursions into Afghanistan, and the mostly factual writings they have inspired. Based upon memoirs and histories, their credibility has relied on the recognisable worlds of Kabul and Calcutta, or the mapped and documented tracks of military advance and retreat. This chapter now moves into the frontier territory denoted by Webb, between the realm of accurate knowledge and the unknown, where imagination has free play.¹ How this realm of imagination and romance was explored through adventure fiction is the subject of this chapter, with consideration as to how far the imaginative skills and literary status of the author fixed the resultant imagery into the public consciousness that extends into the present day.

Introduction

This territory resonated not only with the echoes of 'ten rupee jezail' of inter-tribal conflict and resistance to outside control, but of the recent Second Anglo-Afghan War and the threat of Russian imperial ambitions.² The period that Kipling lived in India as an adult, documented in his memoirs as 'Seven Years' Hard', covering the years 1882-89, a political solution to the military tensions between Britain and Russia on the western borders of Afghanistan had been attempted in the form of an Afghan Border

¹ Webb, p.349.

² From Kipling's poem 'Arithmetic on the Frontier' in *Departmental Ditties and other verses* (1886; London: Methuen, 1922), p.95.

Commission.³ The neutral territory that kept the Asian empires of both Britain and Russia apart, shrank from a barrier two thousand miles wide at the start of the nineteenth century to, by the end, a tenth of that, and in some regions to a mere twenty miles.⁴ The proximity of enemies and the distance from the homeland only served to emphasise the vulnerability of the Anglo-Indian community. For Kipling and many others who wrote of invasion threats, the 'two primary foci of anxiety [were] the North West Frontier of British India and the southeast coast of England - the military gateways, respectively, to the empire and to the nation'.⁵

This chapter examines the extent to which Kipling's lasting influence on literary representations of Afghanistan is based upon his imaginative treatment of the country, rather than the detailed explorations of historical events produced by the authors studied in my earlier chapters. I study in detail two stories in which Kipling engaged with his fictional version of Afghanistan. An early short story, 'The Man Who Would Be King' [hereafter 'King'], is set within Afghanistan, where the Second Anglo-Afghan War features only obliquely as a remembered route into the fictionalised representation of the real territory of Kafiristan (now the Afghan province of Nuristan).⁶ In one of his best-known stories, the eponymous hero of *Kim* spends the majority of the book wandering through northern India before venturing into the frontier regions of Afghanistan, motivated by playing his part in the Great Game as inexorably as the lama seeks his holy river.⁷ My close reading of two sections of each of these texts

³ 'Seven Years Hard' is the title of chapter three in his autobiography, *Something of Myself: For my friends known and unknown* (London: Macmillan, 1937).

⁴ Hopkirk, *Great Game*, p. 5. This area, today known as the Wakhan Strip, separates Tajikistan, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

⁵ A. Michael Matin, "'The Hun is at the Gate!': Historicizing Kipling's Militaristic Rhetoric, from the Imperial Periphery to the National Centre. Part One: The Russian Threat to British India', *Studies in the Novel*, 31.3 (Fall 1999), 317-356, p.318.

⁶ Kipling's 'The Man Who Would Be King' was first published in book form in *The Phantom 'Rickshaw and other Eerie Tales*, Indian Railway Library No.5 (Allahabad: Wheeler, 1888). The text I will be using is from *The Man Who Would Be King: Selected Stories of Rudyard Kipling*, ed. by Jan Montefiore (London: Penguin, 2011).

⁷ Kipling, *Kim* (London: Macmillan, 1901).

contextualizes them within aspects of Kipling's journalism, his life in India and their bibliographical histories to explore how the author transforms historical specifics into such literary riches. The first section for each title deals with knowledge and information, crucial components in the Britain's efforts to control the Indian subcontinent and protect it from outside threats: in 'King', Carnehan's recounting of the first Lodge meeting presided over by Dravot, and in *Kim*, his training during his first visit to Lurgan's strange shop in Simla. The second section of each text deals with confrontation and downfall as the protagonists cross into Afghanistan to face their critical time of testing: Dravot's death in 'King' when he is revealed as fallible and Kim's gruelling overthrow of the Russian spy. Where Henty placed his boy hero in the sketchily drawn setting demanded by the historical episode the particular story was promoting, Kipling created a convincing impression of the territory existing 'just beyond the confines of certain knowledge'.⁸ He understood that for an adventure story to really thrill, it required an element of the unknown to give a '*frisson* of recognizing an image of oneself in unfamiliar surroundings'.⁹ Afghanistan, with the echoes of Scotland dangerously twisted through the two conflicts to date, featured as a site of disquiet in some of Kipling's most important fictional episodes.

Kipling as Journalist: Reporting the Russian Threat

Between 1881 and 1889 Kipling was employed at the press offices of the *Civil and Military Gazette* [hereafter *CMG*] in Lahore and the *Pioneer* in Allahabad whose target audience was the Anglo-Indian community, although sales figures also indicate a readership among Anglophone Indians.¹⁰ Reporting, writing copy, proof checking and

⁸ Robert Fraser, *Victorian Quest Romance: Stevenson, Haggard, Kipling and Conan Doyle* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1998), p.50.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Shafquat Towheed, 'Two Paradigms of Literary Production: The Production, Circulation and Legal Status of Rudyard Kipling's *Departmental Ditties* and Indian Railway Library Texts' in *Books without*

overseeing the production of a newspaper with its tight deadlines and restricted word count enabled Kipling to hone his ability with words into an efficient and marketable skill. As Thomas Pinney writes, 'CMG's first responsibility was to give the official news to a readership of officials', followed by news from overseas (especially from Britain) then national and local news.¹¹ For all its official responsibilities, the paper was not solely a mouthpiece of the State and Kipling had opportunities to hone his mannered voice in the gossipy asides of the social reports and his short stories, gradually accepted by his Editor as filler for the relentless columns of a daily publication. This mix of styles within CMG provided a nuanced menu of fact and fiction, pronouncements, innuendo and storytelling to a sophisticated readership, with the editorial team confident in their subscribers' abilities to discern the essence of this provincial newspaper. It was politically and geographically positioned 'close enough to the headquarters of the British military in Simla to be among the first to learn about developments, yet [...] far enough away to maintain an independent viewpoint'.¹²

For the British in India, the 1880s were perceived as a time of heightened threat of Russian invasion across the Afghan Frontier. From incursions into Afghanistan from Turkestan, those Britons who favoured a strong and military response to Russia warned of how 'her tentacles creep cautiously forward towards our Indian frontier'.¹³ Of great importance to the readership of Lahore's CMG, the majority of whom were involved in the military defence of that frontier, were the intentions of the Russian government and the activities of her army in the territories bordering their area of command. Kipling translated the pages of a number of journals for inclusion in CMG, such as 'the accursed Muscovite paper, the *Novoie Vremya*, written in French, which, for weeks and weeks,

Borders, vol 2 *Perspectives from South Asia*, ed. by Robert Fraser and Mary Hammond (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), 125-36 (p.132).

¹¹ Thomas Pinney, *Kipling's India: Uncollected Sketches 1884-88* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 4.

¹² Neil K. Moran, *Kipling and Afghanistan: A Study of the Young Author as Journalist Writing on the Afghan Border Crisis of 1884-1885* (London: McFarland, 2005), p.4.

¹³ Algernon Durand, *The Making of a Frontier* (1899; n.p.: Elibron Classics, 2009), p.3.

published the war diaries of Alikhanoff, a Russian General then harrying the Central Russian Khanates'.¹⁴ One reason for publishing such detailed information was to communicate with the government in India and onwards to the government in Britain the message that the danger from Russia was tangible and increasing. The reluctance of Parliament in London to sanction the resources and military strategies considered essential to the defence of India exasperated those living close to the border, particularly those who had a special interest in maintaining and extending British military influence. A *CMG* editorial of 24 December 1884 castigated this distant lack of interest:

We dread the ignorance of our countrymen at home, of our masters, the mob - on all matters connected with India and the East. We dread that indifference to danger in Asia, which will always accompany the occurrence of any storm in the Parliamentary teapot. Most of all perhaps, we have reason to apprehend with alarm, some mischievous blundering attempt, by soi-disant statesmen, to solve a problem, which needs the wisest counsels and the best energy, experience and intellect of the country.¹⁵

Having proved his journalistic credentials at the *CMG* offices in Lahore, Kipling was sent 'to Pindi as a special' to supplement the two other correspondents sent by the newspaper proprietor, James Walker.¹⁶ He was to report on a state durbar arranged by the Foreign Office to which the newly appointed Viceroy of India, Lord Dufferin had invited the Amir Abdul Rahman at Rawal Pindi, in March 1885. There, despite almost incessant rain that turned most of the campsites and parade grounds to 'glutinous mire', Kipling managed to fill his reports with local colour such as his impressions of the frontier town of Peshawar, 'the City of Evil Countenances' where the welcoming party

¹⁴ *Something of Myself*, p.49.

¹⁵ Editorial in *CMG* 24 December 1884, attributed to Rudyard Kipling and/or Stephen Wheeler by Moran, p.36. Not all of Kipling's writings for *CMG* and *Pioneer* are conclusively attributed.

¹⁶ John Lockwood Kipling to Edith Plowden, 16 March 1885, quoted in Moran, p.57.

waited with sodden fortitude for the arrival of the Amir.¹⁷ Away from the restraints and criticisms of his editor Stephen Wheeler, he indulged in describing events and surroundings with a heightened realism that frequently crossed into poetic licence. He dramatically portrayed the crowds in the bazaars as 'a vast human menagerie', full of dehumanised creatures, like an army of lower-order Frankenstein experiments with 'faces of dogs, swine, weazles [*sic*] and goats, all the more hideous for being set on human bodies'.¹⁸ His studied nonchalance as an observer was disrupted by the 'disgusting' experience of walking through the crowds, when 'as an Englishman passes, they will turn to scowl upon him, and in many cases to spit fluently on the ground after he has passed'.¹⁹ For Kipling, this was a crowd of 'magnificent scoundrels and handsome ruffians', threatening individuals who gave 'the impression of wild beasts held back from murder and violence, and chafing against the restraint'.²⁰

Perhaps this atmosphere of barely-suppressed hostility above the 'soft oozy' shifting surface of mud, dung and saliva heightened Kipling's unease and caused him to later mis-remember 'a walk into the Khyber, where I was shot at'.²¹ This event seemed, according to Fowler, 'to have acquired mythological status' as Kipling created in his memoirs a finalised and fictionalised version of an encounter for which there exists no conclusive record: possibly involving either his being menaced by a man with a knife, or a youth pelting him with stones.²² His reports from Rawal Pindi certainly included explicit references to literary fiction, as the 'calibans' of Peshawar inhabitants are replaced by the comparative safety of the Amir's troops 'on their best behaviour in British territory they are simply amusing boisterous Fridays, and a Robinson Crusoe

¹⁷ Rudyard Kipling, *CMG*, 1 April 1885, quoted in Moran, pp.134, 135.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.136.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.136.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.136.

²¹ *Something of Myself*, p.44.

²² Fowler, p.28.

sort of tour through their tents is a novel and very amusing experience'.²³ A week later, an awestruck Kipling wrote of the British military Review with its 'infinity of booted feet [and] the exactness of a machine' in terms of Greek mythology, as 'the harvest of the dragon's teeth [...] a crop of armed men ready for war'.²⁴ A journalist desperate to be a war correspondent, he had missed out on reporting the glories of both the Second Anglo-Afghan War and the Third Anglo-Burmese War (1885-6). He was instead immured in the sticky earth of politics, played out in a military display 'alive with the glitter of steel'.²⁵ This 'impression of some interminable night mare' was meant to have the Amir 'reading, marking and inwardly digesting the lesson'.²⁶ Shaken by an outbreak of hostilities among the parties of the Afghan Border Commission and the news of the Russian victory at Penjdeh on 30 March (news which was suppressed during the Conference) the British intended this lesson to be short, sharp and quickly learnt by the Amir.

Kipling was fully aware that the reporting of news was never a straightforward transmission of facts. His journalism contained opinions and perspectives which served his own agendas, and those of his paper and the Anglo Indian community. Much in his fiction was recognisable from newspapers and histories as he had a 'predilection for adapting to his stories details from news reports he encountered'.²⁷ While his journalism referenced fiction, within his stories his narrators, writing official reports, must contend with distorted facts; 'the concoction of a big, written lie' to disguise a suicide, 'a slight increase in sickness' to describe an epidemic or, following a Frontier skirmish rescued from disgrace and defeat by two drunken drummer boys, the Brigadier

²³ Kipling, *CMG*, 28 March 1885 and 5 April 1885, quoted in Moran, pp.137, 161.

²⁴ Kipling, *CGM*, 8 April 1885, quoted in Moran, pp.161-2.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.163.

²⁶ *Ibid*, pp.161-2.

²⁷ Fowler, p.36.

relates his successful military strategy to the sweating, anxious and 'misguided Correspondent'.²⁸

In 'King', Dravot and Carnehan consult the many reference books in the editor's office, although alternative sources of information that Kipling would have read have been omitted. Edward Marx considers that he wanted to 'exclude sources that would diminish Kafiristan's sense of mystery, preferring a Kafiristan where "no one has gone" over one that had already become part of the political machinations of imperial politics'.²⁹ Throughout 'King' the journalist, and through him, the reader, inhabit a recognisable world. Whilst his readers outside of India may not have travelled in the discomfort of Intermediate class or (ignoring the realities of Indians having done the typing and printing) sweated over 'red-hot' presses in the choking Lahore night, they would have been as familiar with the technology of train travel and newspaper production as with the narrative tropes of crowded carriages and India's unbearable heat. Both Carnehan and his amanuensis were contained within the editor's office, but while the storyteller was based in the realm of the rational and the known, the story itself travelled towards the unknown. That this fantastical fable originated from and returned to the realm of the factual and the mundane is what, according to Webb, gives it such power as the imagination 'though easily airborne [...] cannot remain aloft forever; it must begin with facts and must keep touch with them in order to maintain a sense of reality'.³⁰ Kipling carefully made the territory into which the two adventurers pass more strange and therefore more distant, increasing its unknowability. In Webb's theory on the frontier in literature, the greater the distance between the central core of accurate knowledge and the unknown outer reaches, the greater the opportunity the author has to

²⁸ Rudyard Kipling 'Thrown Away' in *Plain Tales from the Hills*, ed. by Andrew Rutherford (1888; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) p.21; 'King', (ed. Montefiore, 2011), p.102; 'The Drums of the Fore and Aft' in *The Man Who Would Be King* (ed. Montefiore, 2011), p.197.

²⁹ Edward Marx, 'How we lost Kafiristan', *Representations*, 67 (Summer 1999), 44-66 (p.56).

³⁰ Webb, p.348.

explore the realm of imagination.³¹ Kafiristan, before its enforced Islamization and renaming to Nuristan in 1896, was one of the least well-known areas of Afghanistan, associated with extreme isolation, ancient beliefs and primitive traditions. Kafiristan was a place of myth and uncertainty, one of the last provinces in Afghanistan to be pacified: by concentrating on these aspects and, like Dravot and Carnehan, ignoring the current ethnographical writings of the 1880s, Kipling's story has endured as a powerful and popular piece of imaginative writing.

'The Man Who Would Be King'

The story 'King' was originally printed in *The Week's News* supplement of *The Pioneer* before being collected with three other tales to appear as *The Phantom Rickshaw & other Eerie Tales*. This was 'No. 5' of the six volumes of Kipling's short fiction in Wheelers Indian Railway Library series (1888-9) printed in Allahabad, with cover designs by his father, John Lockwood Kipling. From correspondence between Kipling and Thacker, Spink and Co., Calcutta regarding publication of *Plain Tales*, Kipling had originally intended there to be a series of five books which, in his letter of 9 August 1888, he noted 'are being got ready for the Home Market'.³² Kipling had by then decided that his literary future lay outside the comparatively narrow confines of India and later claimed to have 'la[id] awake of nights in India, plotting and scheming to write something that should "take" with the English public'.³³ Compact in both size and narrative length, these softcover books were designed as accessible travel reading for Anglo Indian train travellers. At this time in Britain, train passengers were entertained by stories such as Conan Doyle's 'A Study in Scarlet' and 'The Sign of Four' in the *Strand Magazine*, as the triple-decked novel made way for more portable (and

³¹ Webb, p.348-9.

³² *Kipling and his first publisher: Correspondence of Rudyard Kipling with Thacker, Spink and Co, 1886-1890*, ed. by Thomas Pinney and David Alan Richards (High Wycombe: Rivendale Press, 2001), p.153.

³³ Rudyard Kipling, 'My First Book', *The Idler* (January 1893), 477-82 (p.482).

affordable) reading material. In 1890 Kipling's stories were reprinted by Sampson Low in two hardcover volumes, before being published by Macmillan in 1895. In the original 1888 edition that sold for one rupee, Kipling's preface offered a 'collection of facts that never quite explained themselves' in the four tales, comprising the title story 'The Phantom 'Rickshaw', 'My Own True Ghost Story', 'The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes' and 'The Man Who Would Be King'. They are all stories with strong elements of the strange and the supernatural. The persistent theme is of boundaries between the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown being crossed, where fever, delirium and madness in the protagonists allow the narrator to distance himself from his retold tale. Each story opens with an introduction in matter-of-fact terms and ends in abbreviated flatness, but in the central section the familiar realities of reportage buckle beneath the weight of eerie fantasy and 'the blood-and-thunder magazine diction'.³⁴

In 'King' the characters of Dravot and Carnehan are introduced by the newspaperman, whose working life as correspondent of the fictional *Backwoodsman* appeared to imitate Kipling's own job as roving correspondent for the Lahore *CMG* or Allahabad *Pioneer*. By placing his narrator in the familiar position of newspaper correspondent, Kipling emphasises to the reader that it was written by a professional wordsmith, one whose careful crafting of phrases lent an air of ambiguity to his report. The first two-fifths of the story are in the narrator's voice, observing and commenting on the two 'loafers' who cross and recross his path. Two years later the broken Carnehan returns with his clawed hands and his words going 'all to pieces'.³⁵ Here was no heroic figure of Doctor Brydon, survivor of the terrible flight through the Khyber Pass during the First Anglo-Afghan War, artistically depicted as slouched in the saddle during his

³⁴ Rudyard Kipling, 'The Phantom 'Rickshaw' in Rudyard Kipling, *The Man Who Would Be King and other stories*, ed. Louis L. Cornell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.27.

³⁵ 'King', (ed. Montefiore, 2011), p.110. All further references in this section are given within the text.

solitary ride to Jalalabad, bringing the dire news of death and defeat.³⁶ Carnehan slips back into the *Backwoodsman's* office at night, unobserved by sentries, a figure almost as spectral as those in the other stories in *The Phantom 'Rickshaw*. Returning to the room full of the reference books consulted before they left for Kafiristan, the information dismissed at their first reading as 'sketchy and inaccurate as can be' (106) - discussed in depth by Marx - had been judged by them as so much useless knowledge. Practical skills such as military drill or being able to send 'a string-talk letter' (114) served their purpose, but Carnehan's inability with languages was the point at which his equality with Dravot faltered. Dravot 'learned their lingo in a way I never could' and Carnehan was left behind, aware that Dravot 'was thinking plans I could not advise about' (117). In the editor's office, seeking to fix his fantastical tale through the narrator's literary skills, Carnehan desperately tries to knot the narrative threads together as they unravelled in his wandering mind.

Vivid in appearance and bombastic in nature, Kipling draws the flaming red haired giant Daniel Dravot and the shorter, broad-shouldered, black-browed Irishman Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan as examples of the vagabond, on the lower rungs of Victorian society. Transplanted to India and energised by their military service to advance themselves through brute strength and guile, they are unable to convert their temporary successes into permanent achievements. They describe themselves as 'loafers' who 'have been most things in our time', dismissing their numerous short-term jobs with 'the less said about our professions the better' (104). Disgusted with the strict rules in this overly governed empire, their irregular financial pickings reduce them to wandering like the poorest, 'mostly on foot' (104). Yet we first meet Carnehan travelling by the train in 'Intermediate [class] which is very awful indeed' (98) and

³⁶ Elizabeth Butler (Lady Butler) (1846-1933), 'The Remnants of an Army' (1879), oil paint on canvas, 1321 x 2337 mm, Tate Gallery. This image was, somewhat bizarrely, the basis for an advertisement for Franklyn's cigarettes, see Mary Evans Picture Library, ref:10080988.

Dravot surrounded by his luggage 'in a second-class compartment' (99). A camaraderie develops between the narrator/journalist and Carnehan as they talk 'the politics of Loaferdom, that sees things from the underside where the lath and plaster is not smoothed off' (99).

This sense of having 'seen administrative machinery from beneath all stripped and overheated' stayed with Kipling until his return to England where a meeting with Lord Dufferin in 1891 allowed him for the first time to 'listen [...] to one who had handled it from above'.³⁷ Within the story this shared view of the underside builds a bond between Carnehan and the narrator even before the common ground of Freemasonry is established. They are both subject to the haphazard finances of 'a wanderer and a vagabond' and Carnehan with eight annas in his pocket is here richer than the narrator, owing to the latter's 'Deficit in the Budget' (98). Yet at the start of their adventure Dravot and Carnehan are buoyed up by a sense of being more than their ramshackle appearances, of being men who will expand beyond the border of a country that 'isn't big enough for such as us' (104) into the realms of immortality as Kafiristan's 'thirty-third and fourth [...] heathen idols' (105). Through their ambition and greed they reject the restrictions of 'governing' in British India and travel to find a land of unsophisticated inhabitants whom they can dominate through guile and violence. 'King' relates an ambiguous tale of adventurers styling themselves followers of James Brooks, the East India Company military adventurer who through conquest became Rajah of Sarawak and ruled for quarter of a century. Dravot and Carnehan intend to 'Sar-a-whack' Kafiristan by offering their services to any warlike King and 'show him how to drill men; for we know that better than anything else. Then we will subvert that King and seize his Throne and establish a Dy-nasty' (105).

³⁷ *Something of Myself*, p.94.

It is the 'Craft' that proves to be the 'master-stroke o' policy' (115) that 'served our turn' (117). The coded greetings, handshakes and emblems that had placed the narrator under an obligation to help them now supplies the pair with the 'miracle' (117) of recognisable authority over the priests. But Dravot's mark of office as Grand Master of the Lodge, that of the Freemason's compass on his apron, is not his to claim. Carnehan has supported him in their quest to be kings of Kafiristan, coercing the people with superior firepower, claiming immortality through spurious descent from Alexander the Great and all the haphazard and ad hoc processes of exerting control: none of these trouble his conscience as much as the blasphemy of acting 'against all the law' (115). This arcane knowledge, shared with the chiefs and priests of Kafiristan, 'means running the country as easy as a four-wheeled bogie on a down grade' (115) according to Dravot. His claim that the two of them are 'Gods and sons of Alexander' (116), confirmed by the hidden sign beneath the stone of Imbra, sets the narrative on the course of a Greek tragedy of hubris and destruction.

From then on Dravot's dreams (as reported by Carnehan) grow fantastically: "I won't make a Nation," says he. "I'll make an Empire! [...] Two hundred and fifty thousand men, ready to cut in on Russia's right flank when she tries for India!" (118). The comradeship of the original 'Contract', where kingship was a matter to be settled together, disintegrates with Dravot's plans to 'treat with the Viceroy on equal terms' (118) and receive a knighthood from Queen Victoria while Carnehan 'just waited for orders' (117). It is at this point that Dravot begins to realise the limitations of loaferdom, with its random success through chance and bravura. While in Machiavellian terms Dravot's ambition and guile had won him a country, he lacked the moral authority or political insight to govern it effectively.³⁸ The knack of soldiery the

³⁸ See Colin D. Pearce, 'A Golden Crown: The Machiavellianism of "The Man who would be King"', *Kipling Journal* (June 2004), 32-42, p.39 [hereafter *KJ*], and Phillip Mallett, *Rudyard Kipling: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p.43.

pair learnt when they marched and fought with Robert's Army in the Second Anglo-Afghan War helped them train their fledgling army with its 'corkscrewed, handmade guns' (118) but gave no nation-building skills, and Dravot himself realised that 'we want cleverer men than us now' (119) to rule effectively. Echoing the changes from the trade and conquest beginnings of the East India Company to the complex, expensive and logistically stretched administration of the Raj, they require a system far beyond the abilities of 'two harmless lunatics' (106) and their proposed twelve cronies. These latter are not the Sahibs that made up the Politicals or the District authorities but disreputable Sergeant-pensioners and prison warders (118). Dravot lacks the capabilities and character of an empire-builder and needs to connect back into the machinery of state that he had rejected and by whom he had been rejected. He and Carnehan see themselves at the start of their adventure as 'not little men' (104) but with no administrative network, they are overwhelmed trying to control this 'hugeous great State' (119). His plan to hand his crown to Queen Victoria in an act of obeisance can be seen as evidence of his desire to be part of the imperial administration, yet his bargaining price is that of the freebooter - tangible rewards and a knighthood.

In the second section the loss of the markers of status and difference lead to Dravot's downfall. The Kafirs, 'so hairy and white and fair [...] they're English' (116, 118) are of all the tribes in Afghanistan too similar in appearance to Dravot and Carnehan's countrymen, lacking the traditional racial marker of the Indian native. This leads the two to 'develop alternative forms of hierarchy in the explicit absence of race as a signifying difference'.³⁹ The Craft, handed down from Alexander's time, becomes a metaphor for their shared genetic heritage that makes the Kafirs 'related to us English' (106), with the sign of the compass hidden beneath the stone a marker of racial purity. Assuming the positions of Grand Master and Senior Warden, Dravot and Carnehan

³⁹ Marx, pp. 62-63.

enact a drama, a dumb-show of superiority within the context of brotherhood 'not in any way according to Ritual, but it served our turn' (117). By building up their authority through masonry and the link to Alexander, emphasising their status as gods, they are vulnerable to this charade being uncovered. Dravot's insistence on marrying - against the advice of Carnehan and the priests - leads directly to his claim of divinity being exposed as a sham when his prospective bride bites him.

Once the people, priests and army are united against them, Kipling links the sense of collective fury explicitly to the 'Mutiny', with Carnehan recognising that 'this business is our 'Fifty-Seven' (123). The madness is as much on Dravot's side as 'bellowing like a bull' (123) he threatens revenge on the priests and the 'shouting, howling people' (122). Outnumbered and on the run, Dravot and Carnehan show their uncertain grasp of identity by alternately referring to the pursuing Kafir mob as 'natives' (123) and 'Englishmen' (124).

At the crucial point in the narrative, with the two friends and Billy Fish walking through the snow towards the enemy, the intensity of the moment is broken by the narrator drawing the reader's attention to the recognisable world of punkahs and perspiration. Carnehan's string-talk, his thread of concentration, dependent upon steady eye contact - 'keep looking at me, or maybe my words will go all to pieces' (110) - is broken. From that point Carnehan's narrative fragments and he refers to himself in the third person. The story's frame of the newspaper office, a place of exact words, selective facts, of copy, filling and scrap, draws attention to the unravelling story and frayed mind. The leitmotif of the flimsy and inconsequential 'child's paper whirligig' (107) haunting this story transforms the central image of Dravot, vulnerable and out of control, and his spinning descent to his death 'turning round and round and round' (125). The twisting story reflects the uncertain, topsy-turvy world where a loafer can become a

god and a king, where life depends on a hidden marker or a woman's bite and where mountainous borderlands skip and cavort like goats. It is also a world where the severed head and golden crown, which would have provided tangible evidence of the 'truth' of the story, can vanish with a madman's ramblings. This is no dry administrative report such as the 'slight increase of sickness' (102) described earlier in the story. While the narrator waits for an important telegram, short and to the point, confirming the death of a King, news of the death of a different kind of King creeps into the office in the form of Carnehan's rambling, confused account.

The story hinges upon the brotherhood of two loafers and the wider kinship of the masonic lodge, a theme that intrigued Kipling as he explored the contradictions of belonging and isolation inherent in Anglo-Indian life in India. The specific conditions of an empire, where two hundred million people were 'governed at the time by no more than about 70,000 expatriates' thinly dispersed across the subcontinent placed strains upon the social life unknown in the west.⁴⁰ This small group of administrators and soldiers, many expecting to retire to England, saw India as 'a place of labour' rather than as 'home'.⁴¹ Many left wives and children behind in the safer climate of England while they fulfilled their tenure in India. This lack of a permanent family base, even for such as Kipling whose parents and sister were nearby during his time there in the 1880s, led to a greater reliance upon alternative social groupings such as the Club. In his autobiography *Something of Myself*, Kipling claimed that the Punjab Club was the centre of his world, where the 'picked men at their definite work', primarily bachelors, 'gathered to eat meals of no merit among men whose merits they knew well'.⁴²

In their fiction, other writers describe in less than approving terms the Clubs of the Indian subcontinent, which appeared between Kipling's time in India in the 1880s

⁴⁰ George C. Kieffer, 'A Contrary Man and a Mason', *KJ*, (September 2002), 30-40 (p.38).

⁴¹ Pinney, (1987), p.2.

⁴² *Something of Myself*, p.43.

and his description of the Punjab Club in his autobiography published in 1937, a year after his death. In E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) the British men and women of the Chandrapore Club stand to attention for the National Anthem at the end of the evening, stiffening both their features and their resolve as the 'Army of Occupation [...] British and in exile'.⁴³ Their isolation is defined by exclusion, a place where the members could 'smoke amongst [their] own sort' and 'play tennis with [their] equals', with equality judged in both racial and social terms.⁴⁴ The Club is an embattled place of refuge as the tensions depicted in the novel escalate, evoking grim echoes of the 'Mutiny', as the Club takes on 'the air of the Residency of Lucknow'.⁴⁵ George Orwell's *Burmese Days* (1934) has its own 'spiritual citadel' for the British in 'the proud boast of Kyauktada Club that, almost alone of the Clubs in Burma, it had never admitted an Oriental to membership'.⁴⁶ Leonard Woolf noted that the Club in India was 'the centre and symbol of British imperialism [...] with its cult of exclusiveness, superiority and isolation'.⁴⁷ For those serving closer to the Afghan frontier, the solidarity of club membership provided more than just an ideological precept; it was an organised defence against the anticipated Russian-backed attack. It did not matter how credible such a rumoured attack might be, the perception of it was sufficient impetus to influence this very British version of circling the wagons.

As neither soldier nor administrator, Kipling's job as newspaperman made him something of an outsider. The British caste system of officers and other ranks were annually recorded in the *Civil List* 'which everyone had on his desk', where the strict hierarchy and rates of pay of the administrators of the Indian Empire, military and

⁴³ E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (1924; London: Penguin, 1989), p.47.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp.50, 70.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.188.

⁴⁶ George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (1934; London: Penguin, 2001), p.14.

⁴⁷ Leonard Woolf, quoted in Mrinalini Sinha, 'British Clubbability and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India', *Journal of British Studies*, 40.4 (October 2001) 489-521 (p.490).

civilian, were codified in print for all to read, 'but it did not include reporters for the *Civil and Military Gazette*'.⁴⁸ His position outside the supportive but often stultifying circles of Anglo-Indian society may have caused occasional discomfort, but 'this classlessness [...] gave Kipling his freedom to range; as a journalist he could talk to anyone, and as he was neither civil nor military he had no institutional rules to follow'.⁴⁹ Instead of being restricted to a narrow society, he was free to cover a greater diversity of peoples, and develop his sensitivity to accent and intonation. His sense of distance also attuned him to the nuanced spaces between official truth and literary reality.

Kipling's insistence that the Club 'was the whole of his outside world' sounds unconvincing given his position 'outside the official Indian hierarchy, a civilian among soldiers, an oddity among civil officials'.⁵⁰ Later, with his introduction to Freemasonry, 'yet another world opened up to me which I needed'.⁵¹ On 5 April 1886, (not 1885, as claimed in his autobiography), 'Mr. Joseph Rudyard Kipling, aged 20 years 2½ months, Assistant Editor, Civil & Military Gazette, and residing at Lahore' was unanimously accepted by ballot and initiated into the Lodge.⁵² A dispensation from the District Grand Master was necessary as Kipling was not yet 21, and his acceptance was, according to Kipling himself, 'because the Lodge hoped for a good Secretary'.⁵³ There were five Masonic Lodges in Lahore during the time Kipling was working on *CMG*, a figure at least equalled by the number of British-owned printing presses in the city.⁵⁴ It is notable that he chose to join Lodge Hope and Perseverance, with its mixed

⁴⁸ Philip Mason, *Kipling: the Glass, the Shadow and the Fire* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p.49.

⁴⁹ Pinney and Richards, p.2.

⁵⁰ *Something of Myself*, p.51; Mason, p.84.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.53.

⁵² Lodge records, quoted in Basil M. Bazley, 'Freemasonry in Kipling', *KJ*, (December 1961), 7-12 (p.7).

⁵³ *Something of Myself*, p.52.

⁵⁴ Using figures from the Gazetteers and Tax Reports of the time, Towheed suggests that there were 6 English owned and 26 Indian owned presses in Lahore in 1883-4. A decade later the numbers were 5 and 54 respectively. (Towheed, p.131). With reference to her own work on the Russian catalogues of Persian language books, Olimpiada P. Shcheglova claims that at various times during 1890-1910, 32 lithographic printing presses operated in Lahore, feeding the local and Central Asian book markets by printing educational and theological books and texts by Afghan authors, 'Lithography ii. In India' (Encyclopaedia Iranica, 2009) <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/lithography-ii-in-india>> [accessed 30 May 2013].

membership of Indians and Englishmen, founded in 1858 post-'Mutiny' to foster interracial 'bonds of Brotherly Love', (but only between the males of the species).⁵⁵ Of the twenty-six members during Kipling's time, at least six were Indians.⁵⁶ The Lodge:

included Brethren of at least four creeds. I was entered by a member of Brahmo Somaj (a Hindu), passed by a Mahomedan, and raised by an Englishman. Our Tyler was an Indian Jew. We met, of course, on the level, and the only difference that anyone would notice was that at our banquets some of the Brethren, who were debarred by caste rules from eating food not ceremonially prepared, sat over empty plates.⁵⁷

Many considered that divisions between Indians and Europeans were due to social rather than to political barriers; 'anyone who created social barriers between the races was thought to be the real cause of the difficulties'.⁵⁸ This was a useful way of downplaying or denying the importance and aims of the different political groups in India. With its diversity of religion, race, class and occupation, the Mother Lodge was a place where the members met on the level, 'all united without social division' which operated beyond their doors.⁵⁹ Yet further research has cast doubt on the accuracy of Kipling's recollections of his Lahore joining ceremony. According to Marie Roberts, all the lodge officials involved were Englishmen as none of the non-Europeans listed were then of sufficient rank to take an active part in the initiation ceremonies. She attributes

⁵⁵ Rustum Sohrabji Sidhwa, *District Grand Lodge of Pakistan, 1869-1969* (Lahore: Ferozsons, 1969), pp.3-4. Quoted in M.Enamul Karim, 'Masonic Vision in Kipling's selected writing', *KJ*, (March 1998), 27-42 (p.27).

⁵⁶ Karim, p.29.

⁵⁷ Letter from Kipling to *The Times*, 16 January 1925.

⁵⁸ Greenberger, pp.105-6.

⁵⁹ Kieffer, p.36.

these 'inaccuracies [to] Kipling's eagerness to convince himself that Freemasonry rejected partisanship and transcended political, social and religious discord'.⁶⁰

The masonic influence's importance to Kipling seem at odds with the unflattering portraits he paints of it within both 'King' and *Kim*, where 'his favourite low-life subjects: the European loafer, almost always an ex-soldier who has fallen on hard times' are all Masons.⁶¹ Dravot and Carnehan are not only loafers like the narrator but also willing to lie, threaten and extort to their advantage. George Kieffer finds it 'quite shocking to find two Masons portrayed by Kipling as loafers and blackmailers', along with the 'unflattering portrait' of Kimball O'Hara senior, using his masonic connections as an insurance policy against his moral deficiencies as a parent and provider, repeatedly reminding Kim to guard the *ne varietur* papers proving membership of 'the big blue-and-white Jadoo-Gher - the Magic House, as we name the Masonic Lodge'.⁶² Sewn into a leather pouch and strung around the child's neck as a powerful talisman, these documents are as intrinsic to Kim's identity as the chart of the Wheel of Life is to the lama. In 'King' it is also the leather emblem, this time the masonic apron with the compass design, which provides confirmation to the priests of Dravot's identity and status. Yet for Dravot and Carnehan, the plot mechanism is nothing more than a shallow trick to dominate the Kafirs, and differentiate the two loafers from a people amongst whom there are few racial markers of difference, as 'they was fair men - fairer than you or me'.⁶³ Only in *Kim*, written years after his time in India, does Kipling appear ready to consider the differences that could be united through the influence of the Lodge. In *Kim* his experiences of diversity are crafted, polished and spun, with the masonic 'underground tentacles of British influence' concealed within the

⁶⁰ Marie Roberts, *British Poets and Secret Societies* (New Jersey: Barnes and Noble, 1986), p.104.

⁶¹ Charles Allen, *Kipling Sahib: India and the Making of Rudyard Kipling* (London: Abacus, 2008), p.160.

⁶² Kieffer, p.30; *Kim*, p.2.

⁶³ 'King', p.112.

colourful 'Magic House', but the discussion has only one conclusion - that British rule is best for India.⁶⁴

Kim

Kipling was fascinated by 'the dark and crooked and fantastic, and wicked, and awe-inspiring life of the "native"'.⁶⁵ His night-time journeys into Lahore's native quarters, 'a queer jumble of opium dens, night houses, night strolls with natives [...] and the long yarns that my native friends spin me' inspired the contents of *Mother Maturin*, a story acknowledged as a rough and early precursor to *Kim*.⁶⁶ This lost tale of Eurasian life, existing in the borderlands between the racial encampments of 'Indian' and 'European' lives, was intended as 'a full blown novel' but the female critics within the family square pronounced the partially-written draft 'nasty' and 'awfully horrid'.⁶⁷ Without any extant text it is unclear why the family objected so strongly, but its reputed brothel setting would have been unacceptable to them. Mrs Edmonia Hill, a close confidant of Kipling's stated that it was never published 'because John Lockwood Kipling was not satisfied with it'.⁶⁸ Margaret Feeley considers that it was the 'lurid' and 'sensational' writing he objected to, and her own research into changes made to the only extant manuscript of *Kim* show how the process of revision dramatically reduced the original racist portrayals of the Indian characters in the novel.⁶⁹ The family's opinion appeared to have been very influential during his time in India during the 1880s and Kipling himself acknowledges to his aunt that *Mother Maturin* is 'not one bit nice or proper [...] and tries to deal with the unutterable horrors of lower class and Eurasian life

⁶⁴ Roberts, p.102.

⁶⁵ Kipling to Margaret Burne-Jones, 1885, quoted in Allen, (2002), p.172.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid*; Kipling to Edith Macdonald, 1 August 1885, *Ibid*, p.191.

⁶⁸ Charles Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, (London: Macmillan, 1955), p.358.

⁶⁹ Margaret Peller Feeley, 'The *Kim* that nobody reads', *Studies in the Novel*, 13.3 (Fall, 1981), 266-281 (p.271).

[...] Mother says it's nasty but powerful and I know it to be in large measure true'.⁷⁰ He left the manuscript of *Mother Maturin* with his parents in India for safekeeping when he returned to England in 1889. Given the time lag before he transformed and completed the story that would eventually become *Kim*, it is ironic that in 1891 Edmund Gosse writing in the *Century* should plead (with perhaps a tinge of jealousy) for Kipling to 'go back to the Far East [*sic*][...] Disappear [...] and come back in ten year's time with a fresh and still more admirable budget of precious loot out of Wonderland'.⁷¹

For all that *Kim* is one of the stories (along with *The Jungle Book*) for which Kipling is famous, his autobiography implied that this was not the 'real novel' he hoped to write. The family were among his most insightful critics and damped down his expectations with the thought that 'the setting of my work and life would be against it'.⁷² It was expanded from a short story 'Kim of the 'Rishti' first drafted during his time in Vermont in 1892 when it was 'a vague notion of an Irish boy, born in India and mixed up with native life' and then set aside.⁷³ When it 'came back to me with insistence', he took it to the family.⁷⁴ His parents had returned from India in 1893, and at this time (late 1890s), were living in Wiltshire. John Lockwood Kipling provided much of the detail and texture of Lahore life, and Kipling took his ideas 'to be smoked over with my Father [and] under our united tobaccos it grew like the Djinn released from the brass bottle'.⁷⁵ This collaboration with his father, an informed and interested resident of India for nearly thirty years, differed greatly from Henty's rushed and superficial sessions with his amanuensis. There was no quick raid on a few select works of reference from

⁷⁰ Kipling to Edith Macdonald, 30 July-1 August 1885, Pinney, *Letters*, vol 1, p.83, quoted in Lisa Lewis, 'The Manuscript of *Kim*', (September 2001), The Kipling Society website [accessed 3 September 2009].

⁷¹ Gosse, quoted in Hilton Brown, *Rudyard Kipling: a new appreciation* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1945), p.37.

⁷² *Something of Myself*, p.227.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p.138.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.139.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.139.

the London Library, but a distillation of the combined experiences and perceptions of father and son, pooled and refined as the raw ingredients of his imagination.

Unlike 'King', with its unambiguous quest for control in a named yet mythologised Kafiristan, *Kim* ranges widely across (and beyond) northern India. Afghanistan is a subtle presence in the text, a brooding 'Other' that defines and constrains British rule in India. It is a country replete with the subterfuge of the white stallion's pedigree or the trading routes of Mahbub Ali, the stumbling Russian agents and the wheeling schemes of the Great Game. But before Kim can be tested in these borderlands, he must be trained in the dark arts and secret codes of intelligence work.

Kipling's richly textured literary imagination is demonstrated in the theatrical setting of Kim's first visit to Lurgan in Simla in chapter nine of *Kim*. As with Dravot and Carnehan's Kafiristan Mother Lodge, so Lurgan's shop overflows with arcane, specialist, mysterious and hidden knowledge. As with the fudged ritual in Kafiristan, in the cluttered shop in Simla, filled with more wonders than the Lahore Museum, there is an element of pantomime, of display. Mahbub Ali's words at the close of the previous chapter 'here begins the Great Game' are a suitable introduction to the sleight-of-hand trickery that covers the serious matters of service and surveillance.⁷⁶ It is a time for testing Kim's suitability as a spy; to see if he can successfully emulate Creighton, 'a tortuous and indirect person playing a hidden game' (166). The chapters before contain many references to knowledge, where 'there is no sin so great as ignorance' (169) and an emphasis on the importance of what is forgotten and what remembered. Before Lurgan appears he has been given mysterious epithets such as 'the healer of turquoises' (187) and 'the healer of pearls' (202) and the reputation for doing magic. As the boy has earlier questioned 'who is Kim? [...] what am I?' (167, 204) in his undecided, fluid

⁷⁶ *Kim*, p.209. [All further references in this section are given within the text].

identity, the character of Lurgan is similarly unclear. Based on an Armenian trader who had anglicised his name to Alexander Jacobs, he dresses as a Sahib, yet his 'heavy blued eyelids' (246) and 'the accent of his Urdu, the intonation of his English, showed that he was anything but a Sahib' (215). His exotic trade in jewels and precious artefacts provides a useful cover for his work with the secret service, enhanced by his cultivated air of mystery and magic. How much should the reader, with Kim, be impressed with this show? By including tricks for the gullible and naive, Kipling could contrast them with the ideal player (and reader) of the Great Game, who is too sophisticated to be misled.

Lurgan's shop is full of objects that Kim regards not with the fear that Lurgan invites him to feel but rather the curiosity of one familiar with the Lahore 'Wonder House'. His senses are assaulted with smells that 'made him forget that he was to be a Sahib' (211) but the calm categorisation with which he assesses the contents of the shop inspires interest not terror. That first night his senses of sound and touch are put to the test, as the phonograph is found on the floor of the shop. His initial puzzlement disappears when his thinking changes from Hindi into English, enabling Kim to recognise the mechanical nature of the phonograph by likening it to a sewing machine. When he lifts the lid, his momentary qualms of being attacked by a devil are laid to rest by the familiar smell of sewing machines, and it is with a flourish of his (European) jacket that he silences the intrusive noise.

Kim is half Irish, but beyond a love of games and a quick temper he is characterised by Kipling as avoiding the traditional trope of the superstitious and fay temperament of his father's race. Lurgan may practise many dark arts in healing pearls and trading subtle secrets, but the magic of his indeterminate middle-eastern background cannot overcome Kim, sustained by the magic of his father's masonic

lodge, the 'Jadoo-Gher' of Lahore and the certificates of birth and belonging in his leather amulet-case (2, 3). Kim's intrinsic Britishness enables him to resist Lurgan's hypnosis: as the slow pace of his Hindi thoughts are susceptible to Lurgan's suggestive influence, 'his mind leaped up from a darkness that was swallowing it' (218) to take refuge in repeating the empirical exactness of multiplication tables in English, and see that the jar is indeed broken.

Further training is of the kind picked up by Baden-Powell in his 1908 *Scouting for Boys*. After a précis of *Kim* that includes an instruction to the Scout Master to explain the 'Government Intelligence Department' to the troop, Baden-Powell relates one of the tests Kim is set 'to see whether he was sufficiently brave and strong-minded'.⁷⁷ The Play of the Jewels is a lesson in 'noticing small details and remembering them, which is a most important point in the training of a scout', and for Lurgan an ideal game with which to sharpen the observational skills so essential for spying.⁷⁸ Kim's vexation at being so easily beaten by the Hindu boy diminishes, as he plays the game 'many times over till it is done perfectly' (224), fitting with Baden-Powell's injunction to 'be practicing every hour of the day wherever he may be'.⁷⁹ That such observation is practical and necessary is reinforced by its application to the watching and remembering of visitors to the shop, in which both Kim and the Hindu boy take part. In dressing up Kim shows his flair for disguise and mimicry over the Hindu boy who 'could not temper itself to enter another's soul' (226), a superiority later brought into question when Kim fails to recognise the Babu, the professional spy, disguised as a hakim (313).

⁷⁷ Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, ed. by Elleke Boehmer (1908; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.15.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.15.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p.15-16.

These games played at Lurgan's shop foreground a playful, exciting side to spying. Here we are shown a boy whose monetary concerns have already been established as of lesser importance, as 'he was Irish enough by birth to reckon silver the least part of any game' (51-2) and he plays 'for larger things - the sheer excitement and the sense of power' (67). Kipling only introduces the darker and more dangerous aspects of employment in the Land Survey Department once Kim and the reader have accepted spying as a suitable and necessary occupation for a teenage boy.

By chapter thirteen the setting has moved beyond the official borders of India into the mountainous region of the Afghan Frontier. Two foreign spies, a Russian and a Frenchman, have surreptitiously penetrated the country's vague and porous borders and spent the previous eight months gathering information aiding the disruption and overthrow of British rule in India. Their disguise as hunters is less effective than Dravot's as mad priest and Carnehan as his mute servant. Playing the roles of 'exclusively sporting gentlemen' (319) they do not convince the bearers that they are anything other than 'poor Sahibs, and ignorant [...] foreigners [who] cannot speak Angrezi' (340, 350).

The foreign hunters are not the only characters in this section in disguise, nor the only spies. Babu Hurree Chunder is the only one whose disguise Kim cannot penetrate; he, and Kim himself, hide their identities and true intentions from those around them. Soon the true cost of Kim's spying is shown. This 'tortuous and indirect' (166) boy has his closest connection with his lama, who Kim refers to as 'his mother and father' (238). Yet Kim has no qualms about joining with Hurree to delude the old man that his health would improve and his quest would be successful if they go to the Hills, when the journey will prove almost fatal to the lama. This attitude towards an old man who idolises Kim, seeing him as the guarantor of his quest and one who will remove his

earthly fetters, is unpleasant in its utilitarian necessity. When Hurree suggests 'perhaps you might divert him; perhaps I can seduce his fancies' (320), Kim (and Kipling's intended reader) are too caught up in the excitement of the Game to consider the cynical exploitation of a father figure and holy man for the purposes of spying. Even lying to the lama about the warrior part of his work causes Kim no more than a brief awareness that 'the ice was thin' (273). The lama speaks truer than he realises when, on the first meeting with the Regiment, he complains to Kim that 'thou has done a wrong to an old man because my heart went out to thee' (129). Thus Kipling portrays the Great Game as worth all costs in personal comfort, relationships, risk to life and ethical scruples.

Kim's affection for the lama might be composed of both oriental and occidental sides of his nature, but it is 'every unknown Irish devil' (345) in him that launches him at the Russian's throat and his ability to 'think [...] hard in English' (346) that enables him to take advantage of the unexpected situation. Kipling may have written a fantasy of India and Britain combining in the picaresque figure of Kim, uniting those disparate two sides of his head, but his story makes plain that when action is required to forestall a threat, whether from a musical box, hypnosis or a full scale invasion, it is the Briton who transcends and, like Henty's plucky lads, ultimately wins. *Kim*, published after so many years of reimagining and revision, reflects Kipling's world more subtly than Henty's simplistic imperialism. Defence of empire is less about the military trappings so beloved by Kipling as a young man, when 'already there was no surer way to [his] heart than by way of soldiers'.⁸⁰ It becomes instead a tricky and exciting game of individual survival, with the 'all-embracing brotherhood' of the army - the regimented harvest of dragon's teeth of the Rawal Pindi Review and the ramshackle Kafir army trained by Carnehan - held back behind the bounds of the Mavericks' camp.⁸¹ It is an

⁸⁰ Brown, p.50.

⁸¹ Kipling, 'Territorial Battalions', the sixth of a series of articles in the *Daily Telegraph*. This final one appeared on 24 December 1914. The six were collected into a 64-page booklet *The New Army in*

alternative club, this secret society of the Land Survey Department that Kipling invites his readers to join, to accompany the trained spies 'who have a lust to go abroad at the risk of their lives and discover news' (228) and roam as freely as the author's creativity throughout 'this great and beautiful land' (193).

With a richer imagination and more fluid style, Kipling's writings well deserve a higher literary status than the stolid works of Henty discussed in the previous chapter. It is a mark of the affection in which his readers held and still hold Kipling's fiction that the brief reign of two ramshackle kings of Kafiristan and the enthusiastic young player of the Great Game continue to influence our literary responses to Afghanistan into the twenty-first century.

With the close of this section my thesis passes the apex of the trajectory charting interest in popular accounts of Afghanistan. Even before the 1914-18 Great War, many saw in Kipling's writings an unpleasant jingoism that affected his popularity; despite these reservations, his work has seen a resurgence of popularity over the past century. This popularity may have been influenced by the success of films, such as Zoltan Korda's 1942 or the 1976 Disney animated versions of *The Jungle Book*, the 1950 film of *Kim* starring Dean Stockwell in the title role and Errol Flynn as a swashbuckling Mahbub Ali, and the well-loved 1975 John Huston version of 'King', starring Sean Connery as Dravot and Michael Caine as Carnehan. Such factors have certainly reinforced Kipling's reputation as a master storyteller, and overshadowed the following decades but not, I think, to the extent that Fowler considers.⁸² Her work on the British literary imagining of Afghanistan is so centred upon Kipling, and 'King' in particular, that she overlooks many other narratives in the first half of the twentieth century,

Training, published in 1915 and sold for 6d. Kipling Society website
<www.kipling.org.uk/rg_newarmy_chapter6.htm> [accessed 19 December 2012].

⁸² Corinne Fowler, *Chasing Tales: Travel Writing, Journalism and the History of British Ideas about Afghanistan* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007).

concentrating instead on more recent writings from the 1970s and 80s onwards.

Although I have of necessity had to be selective in my choice of texts for this thesis, I am aware of a wealth of authors (less well known today) who wrote fiction and memoirs about the Afghan frontier, from Talbot Mundy in the 1910s, 'Afghan', W.G. Curtis Morgan and Alfred Ollivant in the 1920s, Francis Yeats-Brown and A.E.W. Mason in the 1930s to Peter Mayle and John Masters in the 1950s, as well as the two authors I have selected for my final two chapters, Ganpat and Alice Pennell.

After the deep trauma of the First World War, the brief conflict of the Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919) seemed like the continuation of the Afghan Frontier tribal skirmishes that peppered the last decades of the nineteenth century. The authors selected to illustrate this waning of interest from 1910s to 1930s had the benefit of first-hand experience of the border region about which they wrote, but lacked either the dramatic and newsworthy events that drove the *Sale* phenomenon in the First Anglo-Afghan War, or the literary skills and publishing contacts of those authors writing shortly after the Second. Martin Louis Alan Gompertz (1886-1951) wrote under the pseudonym Ganpat, served in the Indian Army for 34 years, and published more than forty articles, short stories and books over a period spanning the First to the Second World War. His writings on Afghanistan include reportage in *Blackwood's Magazine*, romantic fantasies in the style of Rider Haggard, adventures in isolated empire outposts and a combining of policy and action into a 'factional' novel of which it was claimed 'it is set out in the form of fiction, but every word of it is true'.⁸³ Using his work, I illustrate how novels of romance and sacrifice in the far Afghan Frontier fell out of fashion despite his small but loyal readership.

⁸³ The successful author Ian Hay's review of a reprint of Ganpat's *Roads of Peace* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931) was quoted in the *Mid-Sussex Times*, 21 February 1933 and in many other national and regional newspapers. (See the following chapter).

The move from the end of this chapter to the opening of the next covers a quantum change in readers' attitudes towards the themes of military heroes and imperial values, and the territories in which they were set. Many families were devastated by the impact of the First World War, a conflict in which Kipling's teenage son John died. My next author fought alongside his Indian army troops in East Africa during the first year of this war. Old enmities between the participants of the Great Game changed to allegiances as war now centred on Europe. With the realities of invasion threatening closer to home, Afghanistan no longer featured as a literary site for daring deeds and testing combat, evidenced in the corresponding fall in interest amongst British readers.

Empire's Sideshow: The Third Anglo-Afghan War, 1919

On Active Service: Ganpat's Frontier Tales

All of us are composite beings, and [he] always considered that he was a company of about four different people, and that only one of them was worth anything at all.¹

Introduction

From the high point of Kaffiristan and *Kim*, this chapter now contends with the declining interest in Afghanistan, using the first detailed, significant biographical and bibliographical study of a prolific (though not entirely critically or commercially successful) author of romance and fantasy fiction. Lacking the literary skills or status of Kipling, Ganpat's writings on Afghanistan, covering reportage, historical fiction and contemporary novels, were only moderately successful despite his first hand military experience of the frontier region. A glowing endorsement from the popular author Ian Hay gave a small boost to *Roads of Peace* [hereafter *Roads*], the book this chapter studies in detail, but did not help it 'catch' with the reading public.² However knowing the writer or inventive the plot, my research into publishers' archival material and the critical responses to Ganpat's books supports this thesis's trajectory of a waning interest in Afghanistan during the 1920s and 30s.

¹ Ganpat, *High Snow* (New York: Doran, 1927), p.102.

² Ganpat, *Roads of Peace* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931).

Biographical - Ganpat's Afghan context

An Englishman born in Ireland with a German family name, whose Jewish ancestors emigrated to London via Amsterdam in the early eighteenth-century; a Catholic who saw spiritual similarities with Buddhism; an energetic and dedicated soldier serving in India whose evenings were spent writing sentimental fiction. Martin Louis Alan Gompertz (1886-1951) may well have felt, as did one of his fictional characters, 'exactly like one of the Lamaist images he was studying [...] something with several heads all quite different and looking different ways'.³ He is the only one of my six authors to appear in print pseudonymously, and it is hardly surprising that his *nom de plume* of 'Ganpat' should cause confusion amongst those of his readers unaware of his earlier contributions to *Blackwood's Magazine* [hereafter *BM*]. For them the name 'sounds as if it came from a nursery tale. So far as the average person knows, it might mean a cake or a sweet', causing confusion for others, who 'suspect[ed him] to be a lady'.⁴

His own explanation for the name 'Ganpat' came from the sepoy in his Indian infantry regiment, who had difficulty pronouncing 'Gompertz' correctly. It amused him as a 'long and thin and gloomy looking' man to be titled after 'the jovial, pot-bellied, elephant-headed deity' but the sobriquet served its purpose.⁵ His first contributions to *BM* appeared in the midst of the Great War of 1914-1918. The house style of contributors using British names, initials or pseudonyms would not have easily contained a Germanic 'Gompertz', potentially disrupting the magazine's bedrock of imperial, military and patriotic values. After his first two stories on life in the Eastern

³ *High Snow*, p.103.

⁴ *Dundee Advertiser*, 11 October 1923; *Daily News*, 21 April 1924.

⁵ Ganpat, [as M.L.A.G.], 'Landgrabbing', *BM* (April 1916), 545-562 (p.545).

Front were published in 1916 under the authorship of 'M.L.A.G.', he 'wisely assumed a pseudonym to disguise his German-sounding surname'.⁶

Far from being a fifth column for the Hun, Ganpat's family was steeped in loyal military service to the British Empire. His paternal grandfather, Sampson Gompertz, was born in Middlesex in 1808 and served in the Madras Native Infantry. Sampson and his wife Ellen, born in Madras in 1815, were in Cannanore when the 'Mutiny' broke out in 1857. Although not as central to the outbreak as Lucknow, Cawnpore or Meerut in the north of the territory, the disruption caused to British administration can be seen in the baptismal record of Ganpat's father, Alfred Clemons Maxwell Gompertz, with the unusually long gap between his birth on 15 July 1857, two months after the outbreak of the Rebellion, and his baptism on 25 March the following year.⁷ Sampson served for 32 years from 1829 to his retirement as a Colonel in 1861, which coincided with the restructuring of the European and Native branches of the military in India into the Royal Army under the control of the British Crown, following the 'Mutiny'. He and Ellen had twelve children, only returning to settle in London after the birth of their youngest son, Robert. Of their small regiment of eleven boys, at least six reached adulthood, most of them continuing the connection with India in a military or administrative capacity.

With the strong influence of India and military life, it was not surprising that Ganpat's father Alfred joined the army and spent time in India, having married into another military family with Indian connections. Although he only lived for 38 years, he gained rapid promotion in the 1st Hampshire Regiment, progressing from Second Lieutenant to Lieutenant within eight months in 1878, and winning a medal in the

⁶ Richard Dalby, 'Ganpat: Lost-Race Fantasy Writer', *Book and Magazine Collector*, 210 (September 2001), 46-55 (p.47). There was also a concern to shield the author from any wrathful military authorities should he reveal too much in his writings.

⁷ BL, APAC, N/2/39/7. This delay contrasted with the ten weeks between birth and baptism of Alfred's older brother James, born in 1854, APAC N/2/33/240.

Second Anglo-Afghan War (1879-80).⁸ Martin Louis Alan Gompertz, firstborn son of Alfred and Catherine, was born on 23 February 1886 in Cork, Ireland, where his father was serving as a captain of the Suffolk regiment. The family returned to India, where Ganpat's younger brother, Arthur Vincent, was born on 7 May 1888, a few months after the death, at Epsom in Surrey, of the prolific Sampson Gompertz.

The next trace of Ganpat finds him and Arthur, aged 5 and 2, staying with their maternal grandparents, Henry and Catherine Rogers, in Kensington, London, a common experience for Anglo-Indian children, sent home to spend their childhoods in the wider family circle. The Census of 1901 lists the 15 year old Ganpat and his 12 year old brother Arthur as pupils of the traditionally Catholic school of St Edmund's in Ware, although Ganpat was a student there only from 1900-1903, and Arthur from 1901-1904. Hints of his earlier schooling come from Ganpat's writings in *BM*, where his accounts of his war-time activities were written under a conventional but thin wisp of fiction. There, in discussing the differences in attitude between French and British schools towards the military, he refers to 'when I was at school in France we wore a uniform, kepi, chevrons, &c ... We talked of glory and tried to look like soldiers'.⁹ This contrasts with his memory of British schooling where 'to enter [the school corps] was practically to lose caste'.¹⁰ From this, I infer that he received at least some of his earlier education in France, but have found no evidence yet to support this. There is evidence in the Indian Army records of his proficiency in French, and the publication of one of his novels *The Three R's* (1930) as *Partie d'Échecs* by the Librairie des Champs-Élysées in 1939, translated into French by Simone and Humphrey Gompertz, relatives of Ganpat.¹¹

⁸ Richard M. Gompertz, *A Branch of the Gompertz Family* (Privately printed, 1979), p.63. My thanks to Peter Gompertz, Ganpat's grandson, for generously allowing me to access family papers.

⁹ Ganpat, 'Fallen Angels', *BM* (September 1916), 350-366 (p.359).

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.359.

¹¹ Humphrey Gompertz (born 1899) married Simone Dubath at Yverdon in 1930. He was the son of Ganpat's cousin, Sir Henry Hesse Johnston Gompertz (1868-1930), Chief Justice in the Far East. My

While Ganpat was a pupil at St Edmund's, the 1901 Census shows his 13 year-old future wife, Beryl Constance Fitch, living with her 80 year-old widowed grandfather William Fitch, a retired engineer, and her spinster aunt Emma Fitch, in Plymouth. Beryl had been born in Mussoorie, India to the merchant Thomas and his wife Maria, and it is unclear whether she had any siblings. From St Edmund's, Ganpat joined the Army in 1904, initially the Yorkshire regiment, and arrived in India on 10 February 1905 as a second lieutenant, passing his final examination and appointed lieutenant to the 108th Infantry of the Indian Army on 3 March 1907. While stationed at Bangalore, he married Beryl at the Catholic Church of the Holy Name on 19 April 1912, with their son, Peter Charles Marie Anthony Gompertz, baptised at St Patrick's Cathedral in June 1913.

At Bangalore, Ganpat wrote his first published work, an expansion of his guidance notes to the temporary incumbent of his post whilst he was on leave, worked up into the distinctly non-fiction *Indian Army Quarter Master's Manual* (1914). Dedicated with a Kipling quote 'to my brethren in sorrow', he considered it of value 'to many others, who, like myself, are put into a job about which they know practically nothing'.¹² He lightly described this job as being a dreary captivity to 'his unloved office stool and his grandmotherly charge of boots and trouser buttons, and other dull but necessary munitions of war', a responsibility he would be involved with throughout his army career.¹³ Only in the final year of his service was the title Deputy Adjutant and Quarter Master General replaced by that of Commander of the Thal Brigade in the Kohat District of the Northern Command, and his temporary status as Brigadier made permanent.

thanks to David Finkelstein for finding notices of the wedding in the *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* 3 November 1930 and *Straits Times* 7 November 1930. The connection with Ganpat was confirmed in Richard Gompertz's *A Branch of the Gompertz Family*, pp.68-9, 88-9.

¹² Ganpat, [as Captain M.L.A. Gompertz], *The Indian Army Quarter Master's Manual* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, 1914), foreword.

¹³ Ganpat, 'A Side Show', *BM* (June 1916), 721-730 (p.725).

Army office manuals, with their listings and procedures, offered little scope for the descriptive prose that Ganpat longed to write. With the outbreak of the First World War he was sent to British East Africa [now Kenya] and it was his descriptions of active service there, rather than army life in India, which were first published in *BM*. His ability to capture in words a sense of the pace and personnel of warfare, blending wry humour with pathos, made his vignettes of British assaults and defence against the German army welcome to *BM*'s pro-military readership. The intense and lethal action is prefaced by his fond memories of his son Peter's first Christmas 'in a far-off peaceful Indian station [with] the little sahib's "wonder tree", [and] the six-month-old baby [who] lay in his mother's lap, watching it all with great big wondering eyes'.¹⁴ As a Captain attached to the 101st Grenadiers he waits for orders to move forwards into the German-held territory on the Tanganyika coast, while his thoughts move 'beyond [...] Africa; away to the grey breakers, beating on the misty Sussex shore, where his wife and boy would be that morning'.¹⁵ Not all battles were victorious, and his series of three reports from East Africa concluded with a postscript in February 1917, relating the bloody defeat and surrender to the Germans of the Jasin outpost in 1915, taken just weeks earlier by the British.

Repatriated following a ruptured appendix, his next job was based in England, training future officers in the art of war. His account of this time appeared as a five-part series entitled 'Fallen Angels' in *BM* between July 1916 and January 1917. The tone of his writing echoed closely that of the successful writer Ian Hay, whose description of the training of Kitchener's First Army had also been serialised in *BM*, before being published by Blackwood in book form, as *The First Hundred Thousand* in 1915,

¹⁴ Ganpat, [as M.L.A.G.], 'Christmas Day at Jasin', *BM* (January 1916) 68-75 (p.69).

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.68.

heading the bestseller list for that year.¹⁶ Where Hay writes of 'Mudsplosh Camp' and 'Mudshire', Ganpat describes - often with great hilarity - the exploits of the staff and cadets at an Officers Training Corps in a small town in 'Loamshire'.¹⁷ The 'Cherubim and Seraphim' at Hay's Mess table are here the officers and N.C.O.'s 'of various ages and ranks and degrees of bodily completeness', described as cherubim 'not from their high rank or virtues, but by reason of the fact that, like the conventional cherubim in medieval art, they mostly lacked a good deal of their bodies [...] owing to untimely contact with Hun shells, bayonets, bullets, and other lethal weapons'.¹⁸

Ganpat writes himself into these stories as 'a mere captain of Indian Infantry', his middle name of Louis changed to Lewis, a soldier more familiar with 'the dusty Indian plains, or the rocky uplands of Rajputana, the sandy flats beyond Aden, and the heavy tropical dawns in the African bush' than the chill of the British countryside.¹⁹ His attempts to instil into the cadets the ideals of military service, had mixed results:

'Then *what* was that blither he talked about an officer's stars being "badges of servitude"?'

'[...] It's exceedingly doubtful he's sane. Apparently his theory is that an officer, by virtue of his position, is the servant of his men, and in consequence ought to do more work than them [...] Seems absolute drivel, but that's what he was saying'.²⁰

Returning to India where he was issued with his campaign medals, Ganpat, first promoted to Major and then Lieutenant-Colonel, continued his training role. He was

¹⁶ Ian Hay was the pen name of ex-schoolmaster Captain John Hay Beith of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

¹⁷ Ian Hay, *The First Hundred Thousand* (1915: modern American reprint by Dodo Press, n.d) p.93, 27; 'Fallen Angels', *BM* (July 1916), 1-13 (p.1).

¹⁸ Hay, p. 25; 'Fallen Angels', *BM* (July 1916), p.4, 3.

¹⁹ 'Fallen Angels', *BM* (July 1916), p.4; (October 1916), 499-519 (p.514).

²⁰ *Ibid*, (September 1916), 350-366 (p.362-3).

stationed variously at Sabathu near Simla, Sialkot, previously the winter capital of Kashmir, and at Quetta in the mountains of Baluchistan near the Afghanistan border.²¹ With an intensifying of border warfare in Waziristan, he was allocated to the 2-94th Infantry and sent into active service at the outbreak of the Third Anglo-Afghan War as, despite remaining neutral through the First World War, Afghanistan continued to seek advantage in playing Russian and British influence off against one another. Internal leadership struggles in Kabul made war a politically convenient distraction, prompting Amanullah Khan to invade British India. He believed that troop depletions due to the war in Europe, and recent unrest in India, including the massacre at Amritsar a few weeks previously, had effectively weakened British forces. His troops, supplemented in number by tribesmen, and in firepower by out-dated locally manufactured weapons, were met by the superior weight of armoured vehicles and aerial bombardments. The war ended, after three months and two days, in a treaty granting the British an acknowledgement of the Durand Line marking the Frontier, and the Afghans control over their own foreign policy.²²

This campaign of 1919, the Third Anglo-Afghan War, was, in Ganpat's experience, a series of harsh encounters with an enemy not clearly defined by uniform or battle manoeuvres, but made up of local tribes who could lay ambush and attack unexpectedly, 'a people fiercer, harder, crueller than the rocks they spring from'.²³ The bitterness of tone in the three articles entitled 'Mahsudland 1919-1920' he wrote for *BM* sharply contrasted with the humour of his previous contributions. Waziristan, 'this land of desolation', spreading away 'twisted and cracked and tortured into every conceivable

²¹ British War Medal, Victory Medal and the 1914/15 Star.

²² The comparative insignificance of this war is illustrated in the British Library's website Afghanistan collection, where the First and Second Anglo-Afghan Wars have individual listings, whilst the Third gets a single mention within the chronology of 1919-29. See <<http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/afghanistan/afghanistancollection/1919to1928/sources1919to1928.html>> [accessed 28 June 2013].

²³ Ganpat, 'Mahsudland 1919-1920', *BM* (October 1920), 444-477 (p.451).

shape', was to Ganpat 'a pitiless, stone-hard country', which forced him through 'roads of fatigue and tracks of pain', and left him seething with 'a bitter black hatred against the hand of Fate'.²⁴ This response to the conflict was not unique. Two decades later, John Masters' experience of another outbreak of violence on the Frontier was that 'there is very little doubt that something of the harsh bitterness of the scenery entered into everyone who spent any time there'.²⁵

Ganpat, like Sale and unlike my other authors here discussed, was injured in Afghanistan conflicts.²⁶ The wound to his shoulder received during this campaign may have healed physically during his subsequent leave in England, but the bitterness took longer to cure. Moving from magazine contributions to writing full-length novels and travel books, his tales were mostly in settings distanced either by geography or historical time from Waziristan, although many of his insightful, chivalric heroes had, like their creator, served in the East African Expeditionary Force and in Waziristan. Only in his later books, such as *The Marches of Honour* (1931), set in the border country between India and Afghanistan, did contemporary characters come into direct contact with tribesmen from the hills, such as Tor Gul, an evil and vicious Afridi dacoit whose political ambitions amount to nothing more than kidnap and murder. His earlier title from that year was *Roads* and, as his most significant literary involvement in the Frontier, is investigated in depth in this chapter.

Many of Ganpat's stories centre on modern characters able to access – through hidden mountain passes, strange caverns or unmapped wildernesses – the distant and

²⁴ 'Mahsudland 1919-1920', (October 1920), pp.444, 451, 477.

²⁵ John Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger: A Personal Adventure* (1956; London: Reprint Society, 1957), p.198.

²⁶ I am here discounting Kipling's unreliable account of being shot at near the Khyber Pass, given that he was physically unharmed and there was no official conflict at the time. While being shot in the wrist during the retreat added to Sale's status as wounded heroine and truth-teller, by the time Ganpat was wounded the public was familiar with the numerous casualties of the First World War, so a bullet here or there did nothing to enhance readers' perception of his veracity.

romantic past. His first novel, *Harilek: a Romance of Modern Central Asia* (1923), is a lost tribe fantasy that strongly echoes Rider Haggard's popular novels *She* and *King Solomon's Mines*. The long trek out into the featureless desert, the discovery of a lost people descended from Alexander's golden-headed Greeks, awakening love and a final battle to defeat evil – all the components of a quest romance are present. The range of his adventure fiction encompasses both the speculatively scientific and the wistfully historical. The former is present in the details of aeroplane design in 'The Dreamers' (1920) or *The Snow Falcon: A Tale* (1935), or the bizarre uses of long-distance mirrors in *Mirror of Dreams* (1928), radio waves in *The Speakers in Silence* (1929) or photographic negatives in *Walls Have Eyes* (1930), that lean towards H.G. Wells' science fiction writings. His historical interests inspired stories such as *Harilek* (1923), *Snow Rubies* (1925), *Daïnra* (1929) set in Afghanistan, *The Second Tigress* (1937) set in Burma and *Wrexham's Romance: Being a Continuation of Harilek* (1935).

This longing for the past - or more specifically a longing to *write about* the past - may have had other motivations than the obvious one of commercial success. Ganpat was stationed at Sialkot in 1917, and would have been aware of the connection with Sir Alexander Cunningham (1814-1893), soldier, archaeologist and surveyor, who explored the ruins, antiquities and coins of the area. Presumably in his honour one of Ganpat's most idealised characters, the soldier, surveyor, explorer and romantic father-figure of *High Snow* (1927), is called Alec Cunningham, he of the composite 'company' in the quote that prefaces this chapter. Another influence was the celebrated archaeologist Sir Aurel Stein, working during the early 1920s at Harappa, while Ganpat was stationed two hundred miles away at Quetta. Ganpat, who clearly followed his work, refers in his non-fiction *Magic Ladakh* (1928) to having 'before me as I write a photo by Sir Aurel

Stein'.²⁷ With the discoveries at Harappa indicating an ancient indigenous Indian civilisation, Ganpat may have wished to tip the balance in favour of the West, by reminding his readers of Alexander's campaigns through Afghanistan towards India, as lost Greek (*ergo* white, European and preferably pre-Christian) tribes feature strongly in his stories.

His concerns for finding Greco or Nordic features in the lives of the natives, among whom he worked or travelled, show most clearly in his writings about Ladakh. A visit there in the mid-1920s furnished material for his first travel book *The Road to Lamaland* (1926), a cheerful account of 'sixty days [...] privilege leave' from his office in Murree.²⁸ This gave him the opportunity to walk 450 miles, from Srinagar to the Ladakhi capital of Leh and back, a holiday which he described in the manner of a schoolboy released from his studies, carefree and curious about the world around him. This was his first title published by Hodder and Stoughton, as Ganpat moved from Blackwood after *Snow Rubies* in 1925. The material collected for this and his subsequent travel book enabled Ganpat to write *High Snow* in 1927, a novel set in Ladakh, featuring the trials of love, insanity, Catholic conviction and vertigo.

His other travel book, *Magic Ladakh* (1928), came from a further visit to the area, including into the Karakoram mountains. These two travel books were sold at 20 and 21 shillings respectively, reflecting the higher production costs of maps and photographs, a conscious marketing move, away from the cheaper novels and towards a level of intellectual and ethnographical credibility. Aware of the requirements of serious travel writing, in *Magic Ladakh* Ganpat deepened his tone from that of the joyful holiday mood of *Road to Lamaland* to that of schoolmaster and knowledgeable

²⁷ Ganpat, *Magic Ladakh: an Intimate Picture of a Land of Topsy-Turvy Customs and Great Natural Beauty* (London: Seeley, Service and New York: Lippincott, 1928), p.45.

²⁸ Ganpat, *The Road to Lamaland: Impressions of a Journey to Western Thibet* (New York: Doran, 1926), p.1.

guide. Authorities such as Stein and Moorcroft are cited, and chapters dedicated to details of history and religious belief. Ganpat considered the latter essential to understanding the Ladakhi people, and he made considerable effort to connect some of the rituals of Buddhism to his own beloved Catholicism, pointing to similarities wherever he could. The cheerful Ladakhi, like 'a super-intelligent dog with a highly developed sense of humour', was more amenable to this British officer than the vicious, corpse-mutilating Waziristan tribesman.²⁹ Despite only spending a few brief pages discussing Tibetan polyandry, which he linked to the absence of jealousy and 'all the nasty crimes that polygamy has produced in Oriental countries', it was this practice that attracted most notice in the press.³⁰ With headings such as 'Where Husbands are Dismissed' and 'Where Woman holds Sway', these reviews show the extent to which domestic concerns, with the suffrage movement and the place of women within British and American society, informed critical responses to the book.

Ganpat's views on women, like many aspects of his life, may be deduced from his writings only at the risk of misreading fiction as fact. However much he may have jokingly imagined himself as a polyandrous Ladakhi husband, 'where big brother Bill will be sitting [at home] in lawful possession of my one-third of a wife as well as his own share', the practical reality for his own wife was a life lived in England, caring for their children.³¹ From his reference to his wife and son in Sussex shore during Christmas 1915, and evidence of letters and telephone directories, it is clear that Ganpat's wife Beryl remained in England during the remainder of his military service.³² Their eldest son Peter was born in India in 1914, but both Theresa (1917) and Paul (1921-24) were born in England. Beryl's ill-health prevented her joining him in India, lending an edge of desperation to his attempts to write a bestseller, which would enable

²⁹ *Magic Ladakh*, p.61.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.66.

³¹ *Ibid*, p.67.

³² 'Christmas Day at Jasin', *BM* (January 1916), p.69.

him to rejoin his family permanently in Britain. Ganpat's romantic vision of marriage, with a woman who could provide 'sex-equality and real companionship. Like the Brownings, for instance', was strained by the enforced separation.³³ In his view women (or more specifically, wives) were divided 'into two classes - those who might safely be taken into camp and those who should never be let out of the house'.³⁴ Although ostensibly shaking off 'the attentions of at least seven women [...] generally with the best of intents making life boresome to the muffler-clad, sister-susy-shirted "wounded heroes"' while in England in 1915, most of his books contained a female love interest.³⁵ To one female reviewer, these characters were written with such insight that 'no mere man has any right to know so much of women's foibles as are revealed here!'.³⁶ Yet, by the time *Roads* was published in 1931, a sterner critic for the *Yorkshire Post* railed against the romantic interludes that, in his opinion - assuredly the reviewer was a man - spoiled the book:

As soon as the desperately perfunctory bits of love-making come in, the author loses grip and interest and becomes almost comically like a Victorian tenth-rate dramatist [...] Let Ganpat leave women out and concentrate on what he writes and thinks about with point and vigour - the Indian problem. We can all assure him that it will be a relief. The 'little typist' at whom we are all exhorted to aim all works of art will not trouble to read him then; so that he need not, for the moment, cater for her.³⁷

Ganpat continued not only to cater for women readers, with chivalric heroes and romantic adventures, but (with tongue firmly in cheek) included the 'little typist' of this

³³ Ganpat, 'The Dreamers', *BM* (July 1920), 66-87 (p.71).

³⁴ Ganpat, *High Snow*, p.67.

³⁵ 'Fallen Angels', *BM* (July 1916), p.3.

³⁶ *Scotsman*, 24 April 1924, review of *Stella Nash*.

³⁷ *Yorkshire Post*, 8 April 1931, BL, Ganpat Papers, mss eur B346/3. [Hereafter GP3, with B346/1 and 346/2 referred to as GP1 and GP2 accordingly]

review into a subsequent book. *Seven Times Proven*, a 1934 adventure involving a mysterious jade necklace and pursuit through the Himalayas, opens with a modern heroine ridiculing romance as 'dope concocted for women in a man-ridden world'.³⁸ The youthful, old-fashioned hero is told that his romantic notions are 'as dead as a dozen dodos', degraded into stories of 'sloppy love like overworked and underpaid typists are supposed to revel in reading about'.³⁹ Unfortunately for Ganpat, this characteristic feature of his stories, the superficially ironic debunking of 'sloppy' romantic love while simultaneously promoting the adventurous quest romance, fell between two markets. The men who read his books (and my copy of *Seven Times Proven* has the name stamp of a Lieutenant Colonel) may have agreed with the *Yorkshire Post*, whilst, despite the great rise in female readerships at this time, his writing did not catch this expanding market, as overall sales figures continued to dwindle during the 1930s.

The presence of women amongst his readers is harder to establish than their influence on his writing. In matters of literary style and the business of publication, he deferred to Vera Douie (1894-1979), sister of Francis McCrone Douie, a colleague stationed with him at Quetta in the early 1920s, whose friendship spanned almost his entire writing life. In the semi-fictional foreword to *Harilek*, Ganpat credits 'the kind assistance of Miss Douie - sister of a fellow-student - [which] enabled me to get [the story] typed'.⁴⁰ This 'little typist', far from being a distraction, was one of his most supportive readers and acted as his literary advisor at the start of his writing career. He gave her at least one copy of every title he wrote, and she made scrapbooks of reviews garnered from commercial cuttings services and from friends, kept the rough notes of a planned novel, and left this archive to the British Library on her death. Included amongst the papers is a proof copy of *Stella Nash*, his second novel, inscribed 'To Vera

³⁸ Ganpat, *Seven Times Proven* (1934; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937), p.5.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p.7.

⁴⁰ Ganpat, *Harilek* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923), p.x.

Douie, for much help in many ways'.⁴¹ Vera was the Lahore-born daughter of Sir James Douie, who had an illustrious career in the Indian Civil Service in the Punjab. She was librarian of the Fawcett Library in London from 1926-1967, wrote several books in the 1940s dealing with feminism and the position of women in British society, and was friends with Virginia and Leonard Woolf. It is unclear why her archiving of the reviews of Ganpat's books stopped abruptly in 1938, a year before his final novel was published.

Ganpat's warm thanks in *Harilek*'s foreword, and his dedication of *Stella Nash* to Vera Douie, may have rankled with his wife. She had to wait until 1930 to have a book dedicated to her, long after assorted friends, his mother, dog and children had been acknowledged in earlier titles. Although Blackwood wrote directly to Ganpat's wife in 1923 about *Harilek* and *Stella Nash*, her on-going ill health meant that the active management of Ganpat's literary affairs was handed to A.P. Watt, literary agent to authors such as Kipling, Rider Haggard, Wodehouse, Ian Hay and John Buchan. In contrast with earlier authors who dealt personally with their publishers, Ganpat moved with the tide of increasing professionalization of the different aspects of the book trade. As a soldier on active duty in India, it would have been a relief to have the oversight of contracts and remunerations dealt with by a reputable business. With Watt as his agent and Douie as mentor and advisor, Beryl still managed to claim an active role in his writing career. Family papers record a meeting with Beryl in 1934, who 'was, apparently, his amanuensis and proudly claimed that she would never allow him to depict characters who were not so over proper and correct as to be inhuman'.⁴² Her involvement appears to have been more than simply influencing his work, as Ganpat admitted to Blackwood: 'my wife has now caught the writing habit and is investing in a

⁴¹ GP1.

⁴² Richard Gompertz, p.81.

typewriter with which she proposes to assault editors!'.⁴³ The Watt archive lists Beryl as the author of 'Durkho: A Pathan Love Story', a short story published in *Windsor Magazine* in 1932 as by Ganpat.⁴⁴

Ganpat saw active service again at the Afghan Frontier in 1930, and in Burma during 1931-1932. Through the latter he received not only a mention in despatches, but also material for his 1933 novel *The Second Tigress* and two short stories in the weekly magazine the *Thriller*.⁴⁵ As well as the lurid delights of the *Thriller*, he wrote a tourist pamphlet for the Indian State Railways on the history and sights of the Afghan Frontier, where the fierce enemies of earlier encounters are now described as 'the nearest thing one can imagine to the tribes of the Old Testament'.⁴⁶

In *The Sleepy Duke*, Ganpat dropped his pseudonym and published as Martin Gompertz. Set in the time of the Crusades, the story's hero is a man of mixed parentage, 'neither Norman nor Saxon, but only English', who must battle Norman and Moslem enemies to win his true love.⁴⁷ Whether in writing such a historically based romance (as opposed to the whimsy of *Dainra* or his lost tribe tales) Ganpat was reconnecting to the Henty stories he surely read at school, or whether he was consciously following in Conan Doyle's footsteps, one reviewer wrote that 'here is a stirring tale the like of which we have not had since *The White Company*'.⁴⁸ The *Tablet* gave it two cheers for its

⁴³ Ganpat to Blackwood, 25 March 1924, NLS, Blackwood Archive, Letter book MS 30610. [Hereafter BwA].

⁴⁴ Ganpat, 'Durkho: A Pathan Love Story', *Windsor Magazine* (March 1932) 462-436; Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Watt Archive, Folder 322.12.

⁴⁵ *London Gazette*, 20 December 1931; Ganpat, 'The 13 Gates', *Thriller* (12 October 1935), 350-364; 'The Tiger Men', *Thriller* (26 December 1936), 602-616, 624.

⁴⁶ Ganpat, [as Major M.L.A. Gompertz], *The North-West Frontier of India* (New Delhi: Indian State Railways Publicity, c.1935) p.11.

⁴⁷ Quoted in *TLS*, 25 June 1938, p.435.

⁴⁸ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 6 July 1938. Conan Doyle's *The White Company* was first published in 1891.

treatment of religious conflict, on the grounds that 'it is Catholic yet free from that taint of mawkishness that one dreads'.⁴⁹

The characters in Ganpat's writings increasingly lost the complexities found in earlier books, where he had struggled to contain the heroic features he valued in a single personality such as the composite 'Alec Cunningham, Ltd.'. ⁵⁰ In his final novel, *The War Breakers*, numerous characters and nationalities contribute to the *melange* of heroes and villains. An American Jew teams up with British and French spies to rescue the beautiful girl - and world peace - from the evil intentions of Baal-worshipping enemies, of whom 'some were Communists in Spain, some were Nazis in Slovakia, some pro-Italians in Tunis, some all three'.⁵¹ What now appears to be a pinnacle of hysteria, should be viewed against the outbreak of the Second World War a few weeks before publication, and allowances made for the fervid anticipation that fed into many novels of the time, such as the opening of George Orwell's *Coming Up For Air* (1939).

Brigadier Gompertz retired from the India Army in January 1940, and from then to his death in 1951 I have found no evidence of any further writing. An intriguing article in the *Daily Mail* shows he continued to put his reading and language skills to good use during the Second World War, presiding over a small government department involved in censoring the civilian papers of those travelling abroad.⁵² Ganpat later moved to a farm in Chagford, Devon and was a frequent visitor to the nearby Catholic Buckfast Abbey, where he made good friends amongst the monks. Evelyn Waugh stayed at Chagford in 1944 whilst writing *Brideshead Revisited*, and possibly the two authors met. Perhaps Waugh's temperament made this unlikely - 'his rudeness, his dislike of the working classes, his fondness for bullying and horror of social contact

⁴⁹ *Tablet*, 16 July 1938.

⁵⁰ Ganpat, *High Snow*, p.103.

⁵¹ *TLS*, 7 October 1939, p.579.

⁵² *Daily Mail*, 29 March 1940.

with strangers made him [...] spectacularly ill-equipped to command ordinary soldiers' - and he had been advised to resign from the army.⁵³ Anyone less like Martin Gompertz, the courteous, retired Indian officer with his curiosity of mind, deprecating sense of humour and concerned interest in his men would be hard to envision.

Ganpat died at home in Chagford, Devon on 29 September 1951, and his wife Beryl died in 1954; both are buried at Buckfast Abbey. Although his daughter Terri Gompertz renewed the American copyright for *High Snows* and *Mirror of Dreams* in 1955, nothing seems to have been made of this.⁵⁴ *Harilek* and *Wrexham's Romance: Being a Continuation of Harilek*, were reprinted in a single volume, *Adventures in Sakaeland*, in 1978 by Arno Press, New York.

Bibliographical - Ganpat's writings on Afghanistan

Ganpat's life and writings, like those of Pennell discussed in the following chapter, are not widely known, disseminated or publicly available. The research for this thesis, and for this section in particular, is based on book historical methodologies, using material from several publishers' archives to build an evidence-based argument, showing the falling interest in Afghanistan as a marketable literary subject. Ganpat is a little known writer, and the only recent writing on him (apart from the family-written and closed-circulation family history to which I was granted access) appears to be an article in a book collectors' magazine. That article helped to confirm some of the evidence I discovered, but for the bibliographical reconstruction I have accessed two main sources: the Blackwood archive at the National Library of Scotland which provided a wealth of correspondence from the author at the outset of his writing career,

⁵³ John Walsh, 'Brideshead Revisited: How cinema is rewriting Evelyn Waugh's classic', *Independent*, 23 May 2008.

⁵⁴ US Catalogue of Copyright, 1927 and 1928, <<http://www.ibiblio.org/ccer/1927a4.htm>> and <<http://www.ibiblio.org/ccer/1928a6.htm>> [accessed 8 June 2005].

and the Hodder and Stoughton archive at the Guildhall Library, whose detailed sales ledgers have partly compensated for the absence of correspondence over the main span of his literary life.⁵⁵ Although not accessed for the purposes of this thesis, with its emphasis on British publishing houses, the American publishers' archives for Houghton Mifflin and Doran, and those of the literary agent Watt, may provide further information on Ganpat's writings.

In contrast to his many stories based in central Asia, Ladakh or the borders of Tibet, my focus is on Ganpat's writings on the Afghan Frontier, and the bibliographical evidence that traces the decline in the early twentieth-century readers' interest in Afghanistan.⁵⁶ My selection of his writings include 'Mahsudland 1919-1920' on his experiences fighting in Waziristan during the Third Anglo-Afghan War, serialised in *BM* in late 1920; *Dainra*, his fourth novel with Hodder, set 2,000 years in the past; *Roads*, which combines a treatise on pacification of the area with a Frontier romance; another Frontier romance, *The Marches of Honour*, and the innovative aeroplane design of *The Snow Falcon* whose stirring adventures were abridged for the children's series of Pilot Books.⁵⁷ Correspondence with Blackwood about 'Mahsudland' shows Ganpat early in his career as a published writer, concerned to position his first-hand experience of fighting in Afghanistan in the public eye and (like those who wrote their narratives in

⁵⁵ For a summary spread sheet of my research data from Hodder and Stoughton's ledgers, covering the 19 titles they published, see appendix.

⁵⁶ What countries comprise 'Central Asia' varies with whether the definition is based on national borders, history, ethnicity or climate. For the purposes of this chapter it is based on the five republics of the USSR, an entity that came into existence in 1922 as Ganpat was writing his first novel. These are what are now known as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, but - as the area includes ideas of a bridge or trading route between East and West, the Silk Route and the Great Game - I will stretch to include Mongolia, the Gobi Desert, Tibet and Ladakh. I treat Central Asia as distinct from the Afghanistan/North West Frontier Province for the sake of clarity, but I note that Ganpat himself considered Central Asia as a place 'which begins with the North West Frontier of India' in *Seven Times Proven* (1934), p.58. Another soldier/author who served on the North West Frontier during the 1930s referred to it as 'a betwixt-and-between place, part India, part Central Asia,' Masters, pp.25-6.

⁵⁷ 'Mahsudland 1919-1920' *BM* (October 1920), 444-477, (November 1920), 557-580, (December 1920), 808-822; *Dainra* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929); *Roads of Peace* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931); *The Marches of Honour* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931); *The Snow Falcon: A Tale* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935; London: University of London Press/Pilot Books, 1939, 1949).

the 1840s) anxious as to readers' continued appetites for war narratives. *Dainra* is a clever attempt to combine the public interest in Afghanistan triggered by the recent trip of King Amanullah Khan and Queen Soraya to Britain with the appeal of ancient history following the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb. The King and Queen toured Europe, visiting Paris and Berlin before arriving in Britain on 13 March 1928. *ILN* anticipated their arrival with articles appearing from the end of 1927, many overlapping with the new discoveries in Egypt. The issue for 4 February 1928 was a special number, whose opening six pages gave glimpses of Tutankhamen's treasure, immediately followed by a selection of photographs of Queen Soraya in Paris, describing her as 'dark haired, yet fairer than many Italian and Spanish women', wearing a fur coat to make Parisian women jealous.⁵⁸ By 10 March 1928 she graced the front cover, and the studio pictures of her in next issue (17 March) noted the fifty dresses made for her in Paris, rivalling Queen Elizabeth II's wardrobe. The King was identified even more directly with ancient times, as a photograph, reproduced as a double-page spread, showed his hunting party in Afghanistan 'in a style somewhat reminiscent of the ancient Pharaohs of Egypt, as represented, for example, in scenes of the chase found in the Tomb of Tutankhamen'.⁵⁹

That Amanullah Khan, with his modern innovations and his unveiled Queen, was deeply resented by his more conservative subjects and forced to abdicate, reminded the British that their western values did not necessarily appeal to the Afghans. The publication of *Roads* may have been intended to reassure Ganpat's readers that there was a useful long-term benefit to engagement in Afghanistan, following the upheaval of the abdication and the assassination of Amanullah Khan's successor Nadir Shah. Two characters from *Roads* reappeared later that same year, in *Marches of Honour*, a rather

⁵⁸ *ILN*, 4 February 1928, p.169.

⁵⁹ *ILN*, 10 March 1928, pp.394-5.

unconvincing tale of thwarted love and tribal raids. *Snow Falcon* coincided with cinematic interest in the Afghan Frontier, shown in the popular 1935 film *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, loosely adapted from Francis Yeats-Brown's 1930 book.⁶⁰

Ganpat first contacted Blackwood in 1915, from a military hospital in London where he was recovering from his near-fatal burst appendix. The months of enforced rest gave him the time to develop his writing habit, and from his 'maiden effort' published in the January 1916 edition of *BM*, he provided copy for a total of fourteen issues to the end of 1920.⁶¹ Sales of the magazine rose from 9,200 a month in 1914, at the start of the First World War, to 26,000 in 1916, giving him access to a wide readership, as individual copies were frequently circulated amongst multiple readers in clubs and colonial libraries.⁶² Such publicity was of great value to a writer starting their career: Joseph Conrad credited the magazine with having taken his name 'wherever the English language is read'.⁶³

Called up to fight in the Third Anglo-Afghan War at the end of 1919, Ganpat wrote to Blackwood in April 1920 that, as 'the serious fighting is all over, and we are now a rather bored "army of occupation" of sorts', he was busy preparing a series of articles for publication.⁶⁴ Did Blackwood, asked Ganpat, think that his impressions of a "'hired assassin" in a little known country' would be 'likely to interest the reading public

⁶⁰ Francis Yeats-Brown, *Bengal Lancer* (London: Gollancz, 1930). Since his time at Blackwood's, Ganpat had shown an interest in the film rights of his novels, an option that was at least initially raised (relating to his first novel *Harilek*) by Max Weintraub in 1936, where the enquiry was redirected to Watt, but nothing appears to have come of this.

⁶¹ Ganpat to Blackwood, 3 November 1916, Aurangabad, India, BwA, MS 30174. For my chronological record of Ganpat's bibliography, see bibliography below.

⁶² David Finkelstein, 'The Rise and Fall of the House of Blackwood's Magazine', *Blackwood's Magazine* website, <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/virtualhosts/blackwoodsmagazine_com/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-house-of-blackwoods-magazine/> [accessed 19 August 2013].

⁶³ *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, ed. by Frederick Karl and others, 9 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983-2008), iv, 1908-1911, ed by Frederick Karl and Laurence Davies, p.49. 'There isn't a single club and messroom and man-of-war [...] which hasn't its copy of *Maga*'. iv.506.

⁶⁴ Ganpat to Blackwood, 2 April 1920, Waziristan, BwA, MS 30189.

after five years and more of nothing but war stories'?⁶⁵ The most popular war stories of the 1920s dealt with the First World War and its aftermath, something of which Ganpat had comparatively little experience beyond his brief stint in East Africa. Despite this overshadowing of Afghanistan as a literary topic, Blackwood judged there was still sufficient interest, and used Ganpat's narrative in three consecutive issues from October to December 1920, placing the November instalment as the prestigious first article in the magazine, making Ganpat 'very proud to have achieved the 'hat trick' so to speak, in opening *Maga* for the third time!'.⁶⁶ He discussed with his publisher that, while readers of *BM* were on the whole familiar with the territory (or at least its literary representation), there would be difficulties in making a book of his first-hand experiences in Waziristan 'intelligible to readers unacquainted with frontier conditions in India'.⁶⁷ He was keen to submit to another (unspecified) magazine a short descriptive article, illustrated with photographs, on the Frontier region, that 'might be of interest to (and incidentally broaden the mental horizons of) the large number of people who never read anything except illustrated magazines and the *Daily Mirror*', but there is no indication in the archives that Blackwood encouraged, or even allowed, him to publish his work elsewhere.⁶⁸

His next contact with Blackwood enclosed the manuscript of his first full-length book 'entitled *Harilek*. I do not know whether to call it a novel, or a romance, so I have compromised and called it a "story", which is as a matter of fact, rather an accurate label'.⁶⁹ This was his 'lost world' fantasy of an ancient Greek civilization, isolated on a

⁶⁵ Ganpat to Blackwood, 2 April 1920, Waziristan, BwA, MS 30189.

⁶⁶ Ganpat to Blackwood, 20 October 1920, *Ibid.* As Robert Patten and David Finkelstein have discussed, the 'place d'honneur' of heading the contents list of an issue of *BM* was considered by its editorial team as 'opening the ball', using the metaphor of 'arranging the intricate dance sequences of a society function' with all its attendant rituals, rankings and reputations. Robert L. Patten and David Finkelstein, 'Editing *Blackwood's*; or, What Do Editors Do?' in *Print Culture and the Blackwood Tradition, 1805-1930*, ed. by David Finkelstein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 146-183 (p.163).

⁶⁷ Ganpat to Blackwood, 20 October 1920, BwA, MS 30189.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Ganpat to Blackwood, 2 January 1923, BwA, MS 30610.

plateau in the middle of the Gobi desert, with a plot which Blackwood considered 'has been used very extensively, and I confess that there are parts of your story which remind me of Rider Haggard'.⁷⁰ In spite of, or perhaps because of, the similarities, Blackwood brought out *Harilek* in Britain, with a simultaneous publication in America by Houghton Mifflin, arranged by the agent Curtis Brown. Ganpat was very concerned to secure copyright in America by having the book simultaneously published stateside. His discussions with Blackwood on the matter demonstrate that Vera Douie, acting as his literary advisor as well as his typist, had given him much useful information on the publishing business, including consideration of serial and film rights.

Blackwood's flyer for *Harilek* placed it as 'a novel for everyone who has enjoyed *King Solomon's Mines* or *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*'.⁷¹ For the *Universe*, familiar with his magazine contributions, 'the early promise [...] is now more than fulfilled [...] in a story [that] reminds us of Robinson Crusoe [and] Rider Haggard'.⁷² In America, reviewers connected the lost tribe fantasy to those of 'Conan Doyle to "Tarzan" Burroughs - even Kipling touches on it in "The Man Who Would Be King"'.⁷³ *Harilek's* appearance in the bookshops in Britain had drawn an aside from a *TLS* reviewer that the heroine 'will certainly have to wear more clothes on the cinema than she does on the jacket'.⁷⁴ This was a matter raised by Ganpat himself, two months before publication, writing that 'there is too much of her [with] a large expanse of leg' on the dust jacket, something he found off-putting and misleading.⁷⁵ In America

⁷⁰ Blackwood to Ganpat, 10 February 1923, *Ibid*.

⁷¹ GP2. These references are carefully calculated to appeal to both the British (with Haggard) and American (with Twain) markets.

⁷² *Universe*, n.d., on *Harilek*, GP2.

⁷³ *New York Herald*, 28 October 1923, on *Harilek*, GP2.

⁷⁴ *TLS*, 27 September 1923, GP2.

⁷⁵ Ganpat to Blackwood, 4 July 1923, BwA, MS 30610.

Houghton Mifflin wrote that 'the jacket is not suited to our market here' and produced instead 'a more understated jacket picture' of rocks, bones and circling vultures.⁷⁶

Harilek sold well in the original 6/- edition, in the British and Colonial markets, with 4,620 copies nearly selling out within the first two years (and Houghton Mifflin selling 4,195 copies in America by the end of 1924) but the 2/- edition brought out in 1925, as Blackwood admitted, was a 'complete failure', with only a third of its 15,750 copies selling.⁷⁷ Blackwood attributed this to a slump in the market, where due to over-production, 'many Publishers dumped their surplus stock [...] and in consequence killed new books'.⁷⁸ Publishers frequently make such claims when their sales predictions fail; in the mid-1920s the book trade was in a stronger position than a decade later, when Pennell (see my next chapter) bemoaned the difficult conditions, agreeing with her publisher Murray that 'it was an unfortunate period from 1928 for books: and specially till 3 years ago, for books with an Indian setting'.⁷⁹

Harilek's sales figures did not achieve the lucrative high numbers of the bestsellers of the day, when, during the 'war books boom' in the late 1920s, Eric Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) sold 25,000 copies in 2 weeks, and the sentimental *Tell England* by Ernest Raymond (1922) sold 300,000 copies by 1939.⁸⁰ During the First World War, Hodder (Ganpat's next publisher) had, by comparison, sales for their bestselling authors of 90,000 for Rider Haggard (three titles) in 1913, 100,000 for Conan Doyle (three) in 1914, with Sapper's top titles selling 145,000 and 173,000 in 1916 and 1917, and Ian Hay's *A Knight on Wheels* alone selling 120,000 in

⁷⁶ Houghton Mifflin to Blackwood, 2 July 1923, *Ibid.*; Dalby, p.49.

⁷⁷ Blackwood to Ganpat, 27 August 1925, BwA, MS 30610.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Alice Pennell to Murray, 12 July 1937, JMA, 12927/242/CP20.

⁸⁰ Eric Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (London: Putnam, 1929), Ernest Raymond, *Tell England* (London: Cassell, 1922); my thanks for these figures to Vincent Trott, who is researching myths of the First World War in Forties Literature, Open University Ph.D dissertation in preparation.

1916.⁸¹ Yet for an unknown author's first book, *Harilek* was a respectable introduction into the book market. The American edition started well, with Houghton Mifflin predicting 'a decided success' and Curtis Brown considering translation rights.⁸² Four months later Blackwood was being told that over 4,000 copies had been sold, and a 'considerably encouraged' Houghton Mifflin, anxious to make advance preparations, were asking when Ganpat's next novel would be ready.⁸³ It therefore came as a considerable shock to both Blackwood and Ganpat when Houghton Mifflin unexpectedly rejected his second novel, considered by both publisher and author to be better than *Harilek*, with the subsequent loss of copyright protection in the American market. Although the American sales for *Harilek* were (in a generous light) merely encouraging rather than phenomenal, the style of the new book, rather than the financial returns of the previous one, appears to have been behind this rejection. Houghton Mifflin wrote that in *Stella Nash* 'the love story, which is here the main element, is [...] rather stagnant and unconvincing, and the mystery and adventure [...] too scattering to hold the reader'.⁸⁴ Eventually the American publishers agreed to take 2,500 copies of the book printed by Blackwood, effectively blocking the risk of piracy but crucially not securing the copyright. Blackwood, after fulminating against America's refusal to abide by the Berne Convention on copyright, admitted that:

it is impossible to say what may make a novel successful. One can only gamble on one's judgement. A book with many good qualities falls flat; another like [Edgar Rice Burroughs'] *Tarzan of the Apes* sells by the million.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Kate Macdonald, 'The Fiction of John Buchan with particular reference to the Richard Hannay novels', Unpublished PhD thesis, University College, London, 1991, Appendix 1, pp.352-7.

⁸² Curtis Brown to Blackwood, 22 October 1923, BwA, MS 30610.

⁸³ Curtis Brown to Blackwood, 12 February 1924, *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Houghton Mifflin to Curtis Brown, 18 March 1924, *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Blackwood to Ganpat, 8 July 1924, *Ibid.*

By the end of the year Ganpat, again expressing his concern to secure American copyright and serial rights, was asking Blackwood for advice on future books: 'whether you think the public can stand more adventure and another lot of mislaid people - savage this time - [...] Or is it time I got down to serious work?'.⁸⁶ The suggestion he received back was to stick to adventure stories, as 'it does seem [...] that when an author has been successful in a particular line of novel, that is the line which the public like and will expect with every new book'.⁸⁷ So Ganpat shouldered the disappointment over *Stella Nash*, which, 'with all its faults it is worth a great many of the *Harilek* sugar cake stuff but the public evidently prefers pink and white icing' and continued with his adventure stories, keeping his proposed travel writings on Ladakh as 'a sop to my literary conscience', rather than a serious change of direction.⁸⁸

Another lesson learnt was that his publisher, even one as paternalistic and 'old school' as Blackwood, did not necessarily act in Ganpat's best interest. For his next book, *Snow Rubies*, he signed up with the literary agent Watt. This came as an unwelcome surprise to Blackwood, disrupting their business dealings with the agent Curtis Brown in placing book, serial and film rights in America, and causing some restrained and gentlemanly recriminations between the two, with Curtis Brown making the 'somewhat revolutionary [...] suggestion' that in future they be allowed direct contact with Blackwood's authors.⁸⁹ Blackwood dealt with the British publication of *Snow Rubies*, but notably Watt did indeed get better terms for Ganpat from Houghton Mifflin than Curtis Brown. From then on, Blackwood refused Ganpat's subsequent titles, and

⁸⁶ Ganpat to Blackwood, 6 November 1924, BwA, MS 30610. He claimed to have 'had more money over there from *Harilek* than from home despite your very much higher royalties. I suppose they are a bigger reading - or possibly - buying public.' Tracing through the letters I have only been able to find mention of some £320 in total royalties for the three titles published by Blackwood's (excluding their initial payment for *Harilek*) while there is only reference to one royalty payment from Houghton Mifflin of £132. These figures are therefore only partial accounts.

⁸⁷ Blackwood to Ganpat, 1 December 1924, *Ibid*.

⁸⁸ Ganpat to Blackwood, 30 December 1924, *Ibid*.

⁸⁹ Curtis Brown to Blackwood, 15 October 1924, *Ibid*

when Watt admitted they had not secured any offer for the serial rights of *Snow Rubies*, Blackwood could not resist pencilling a waspish 'Good!' in the margin of the letter.⁹⁰

From Ganpat's non-fiction *Road to Lamaland* in 1926, to his last novel *The War Breakers* in 1939, he had nineteen titles published by Hodder, with at least the first four novels simultaneously published in America by Doubleday Doran. Apart from *Road to Lamaland*, the usual practice for the novels was for an initial print run of 4,000 copies selling at 7/6, followed within a year or two by up to 10,000 Yellow Jackets, cheaper, smaller hardcover books, selling at 2/-. Of the four titles with a specific Afghan or Frontier theme, *Dainra* followed this route exactly whilst *Roads* was issued in three different (and differently priced) editions, *Marches of Honour* had only 5,500 copies released in the cheaper format after the outbreak of the Second World War (eight years after 3,500 copies at 7/6 first went on sale), and *Snow Falcon*, after a single print run of 4,000 at 7/6, was edited and abridged by Pilot Books for children and published in 1939 and again in 1949.⁹¹ This imprint by the University of London ran from 1937-1970, publishing titles edited and abridged for class use by authors such as Baroness Orczy, Wilkie Collins, Rider Haggard, John Buchan, Biggles and Sapper.

Hodder, combined with Doran in America and the agency of Watt, took full advantage of the propaganda value of what Lise Jaillant terms the 'war writing brand'.⁹²

Tracing Sapper's journey from war writer to thriller writer, she notes how his mixture of

⁹⁰ Watt to Blackwood, 19 May 1925, BwA, MS 30610. His attitude reflects that of his predecessor and uncle William Blackwood III, who wrote to Charles Whibley, columnist on *BM*, that 'these Literary Agents have reduced publishing to a level of a grocers' business without the profits.' Letter Blackwood to Whibley, 21 September 1904, Blackwood Papers, quoted in David Finkelstein, *The House of Blackwood: Author-Publisher Relations in the Victorian Era* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University, 2002), p.133. Elsewhere Blackwood wrote 'their business and interest is to get the highest possible price for their clients and those generally run far beyond what any old established, self-respecting house would be justified in paying.' Undated memorandum, Blackwood Papers, quoted in Patten and Finkelstein, p.172.

⁹¹ During the war years the restrictions of paper quotas could be somewhat mitigated by publishing books considered to serve the national interest. Hodder & Stoughton's sales of educational books were one third of their turnover in 1939. By 1945 this had risen to 40%. See John Attenborough's house history *A Living Memory: Hodder & Stoughton publishers 1868-1975* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), p.142.

⁹² Lise Jaillant, 'Sapper, Hodder & Stoughton, and the Popular Literature of the Great War', *Book History* 14 (2011), 137-166 (p.138).

horror and humour, akin to the style of his fellow authors Ian Hay and John Buchan, 'fitted perfectly with the editorial line' of Hodder.⁹³ This was a style that Ganpat sought to imitate, and while *Roads* lacks the comic banter of his more fantastical stories, his portrayal of the military's heroic resilience, combined with its factual underpinning, the book's celebrity endorsement and Hodder's marketing decisions, make *Roads* an intriguing example of a popular narrative of the Afghan Frontier.

Hodder treated *Roads* slightly differently as only 3,500 copies were printed in April 1931 to sell at 7/6. This was not the prestigious travel book *Road to Lamaland* that had begun their working relationship in 1926, when 2,000 copies were printed to sell at 20/-, nor was it quite the fantasy novels of the intervening years, that had secured modest but steady sales of an average 12,900 copies. Hodder's advertising and the corresponding reviews, suggests they were unsure of exactly how to place *Roads*. For such a resolute setting on the Frontier tribal lands bordering Afghanistan, the press listings presented the book with the rather clumsy tag-line that it 'shows us India that is and the way out', a pointer taken up in an advertisement in *The Times* that simply refers to it as 'a 'Truth about India' novel by Ganpat'.⁹⁴ The dust jacket for the first edition has a dull monochrome watercolour, looking out over the shoulders of a British officer, his shirt, skin and pith helmet the same sandy ochre of the valley floor that frames him, flanked by two turbaned Indian soldiers, their uniforms as grey as the distant mountains and sky. There is nothing vibrant or exciting to draw the potential reader: the three soldiers, inactive and uninvolved are turned three-quarters away, gazing pensively at the empty road that winds towards the hills. Beneath the insignificant grey title and ochre author's name, the legend 'A Novel of India as a Soldier Sees It' appears as a hand-written afterthought. These mixed messages of India or Afghanistan, of action or stasis,

⁹³ Jaillant, p.141.

⁹⁴ *Spectator*, 11 April 1931, GP2; *Times*, 21 April 1931.

could explain the reduced numbers that were originally printed at 7/6 - 3,500 as against the more usual 4,000 - but it sold well, and 3,000 copies were reprinted two years later to sell at 3/6 - a first for Ganpat at this price.

This 1933 edition of *Roads* had the undoubted advantage of an endorsement of its truth and relevance from bestselling author Ian Hay. As already discussed, Ganpat had modelled some of his own early contributions to *BM* on this popular author, and 'Fallen Angels' in particular echoes Hay's humorous style. The newspapers used Hay's eye-witness account to verify Ganpat's accuracy. As with Eyre and Sale in 1842-3, and Kaye's *History* in 1851, confirmation of events by another eyewitness bolstered the readers' trust in the reliability of the writers' accounts. Kipling, who appealed to the imagination rather than the historical record, had no need of such corroborations. The *Mid-Sussex Times* typically reports Hay's endorsement:

Ian Hay, who has just returned from a tour of the North-West Frontier, has recently written of *Roads* in no uncertain terms: 'How near did we go to losing India during the war and the years immediately following? Few of us know, for our eyes were fixed nearer home during that time. I, for one, had no idea until, a few months ago, I visited the North-West Frontier for myself and heard the story – or, rather, the whole epic. And now here it comes again in *Roads*. It is set out in the form of fiction, but every word of it is true'.⁹⁵

Twenty-one of the forty seven press cuttings for this edition in the Ganpat Papers at the British Library explicitly mention Hay, often giving the full quotation above, while others used close paraphrasing of his words. For other reviewers, *Roads* now came under the category of 'famous books which have attracted much attention',

⁹⁵ *Mid-Sussex Times*, 21 February 1933, GP3.

with one even moved to proclaim it 'distinguished by literary excellence'.⁹⁶ However unintentionally, Hay confirms that public attention and readers' interests were indeed 'fixed nearer to home' during the First World War: if the focus was on Europe rather than India, how much more was her sparsely populated border with Afghanistan ignored during this period.

With publication and sales figures diminishing in the latter half of the 1930s, and his last five titles not reissued in a cheaper format, it is surprising that two titles from earlier in that decade *were* reprinted in the lead up to the Second World War. In an apparent disruption of the explicit downward fall of the trajectory of interest in Afghanistan that I trace throughout this thesis, both deal with the Afghan Frontier, but this may simply be evidence of a publisher keen to produce, at little expense, reassuring tales of defenders of empire, holding the line against the threat of invasion. *Roads* had an unprecedented third outing in 1938, with 3,000 being printed to sell at 4/-, and *Marches of Honour* had 5,500 printed as 2/- Yellow Jackets a year later. In total, over a spread of 12 years *Roads* sold some 9,000 copies, making Hodder a profit of over £150 (well above average for Ganpat's books) and netting the author royalties of over £250 - slightly better than his earnings for his subsequent titles. Whilst not being his most lucrative or bestselling title, *Roads* appears to be the book that most closely reflects Ganpat's military life, and the ideals for which he committed over half his life to service in the Indian Army.

The Ganpat Papers end in 1938 with the publication of Ganpat's penultimate novel, *Sleepy Duke*, for which Hodder belatedly anticipated low sales. As the royalty of £200 was paid out, and before the book was released, a note was added to the ledger

⁹⁶ *Llandudno & North Wales Weekly News*, 23 February 1933; *East Anglian Daily Times*, 13 March 1933, GP3.

'Not out. A bad buy. Write off £100'.⁹⁷ With British sales of less than half of the 2500 copies printed, the following year another 600 copies were offloaded, by reducing the selling price from 8/6 to 2/6. The ledger entries show 1939 a bad year for Ganpat's publishers, with a loss of £200 from the reprint of *Roads* (which initially lost £82, recouped through later sales) and *Sleepy Duke* (£118) only slightly offset by the £62 brought in through sales of eight other Ganpat titles. Records for 1941, the financial year in which the printing works at Warwick Square suffered damage from a New Year night-time bombing raid, show that 200 sheets of *Sleepy Duke* were wasted, while his last novel *War Breakers* (another minor loss to Hodder) had 100 copies destroyed by the bomb.

Hodder's ledgers record that these two titles were the only ones to make a loss for the publishers, who overall made nearly £2,000 from their arrangement with Ganpat. He received a total of £4,500 in royalties, and the change to selling the copyright for *Seven Times Proven* and *Wrexham's Romance* in 1934 (for £225 each) did not markedly change his fortunes.⁹⁸ In all Hodder sold over 165,000 copies of Ganpat's writings over eighteen years, from the high point of his fourth novel *Voice of Dashin* (1926) that sold over 14,000 copies to the dismal 2,085 for *Sleepy Duke* whose final eleven copies were remaindered in 1942. This last figure was part of the selling off of its pre-war stock by the publisher, having given optimistic and unreliable assurances to their loyal authors and agents that 'their books would be brought back into print as the first priority when peace and paper rationing permitted'.⁹⁹ During the war, with enforced blackouts and the 'boredom of dug-outs and observation posts', the public's voracious appetite for reading

⁹⁷ London, Guildhall Library, Hodder and Stoughton Archive, Profit and Loss ledger 1907-61, vol 18 GL-GREG, entry for Gompertz.

⁹⁸ The value of sterling fluctuated during Ganpat's time with Hodder, but taking a mid-point of 1935 and using the purchasing power calculator at < <http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/> > [accessed 12 September 2013], his overall royalties equate to £251,400 at 2011 values, the most recent comparison available.

⁹⁹ Attenborough, p.141.

material helped Hodder clear their old stock.¹⁰⁰ The ledger shows that in the final year of sales recorded for Ganpat's work in 1943, twelve years after its first publication, *Roads* found 1,520 interested buyers at the full price of 4/-. Against the rise and fall of literary interest in Afghanistan that this thesis tracks, this is one of the occasional small quirks countering both the falling trajectory and Ganpat's concern, from twenty-five years earlier, that 'by now most people are pretty sick of war stories'.¹⁰¹

To substantiate my overall theme - that the earlier interest in reading about Afghanistan progressively faded in the last decades of this study - Ganpat's entries in the Hodder ledgers need to be divided into Afghan and non-Afghan subjects to enable comparisons. Of the four books I identify as Afghan in theme, *Dainra*, *Roads*, *Marches of Honour* and *Snow Falcon*, the latter had only one print run with Hodder that appears in the ledger, but achieved wider circulation as an abridged children's book under Pilot Books imprint, although further research would be needed to discover any extant records. Of the eighteen novels that Hodder published between 1926 and 1939, the most lucrative (in terms of sales figures, royalties for the author and profits for the publisher) were those published in the first six years. Ganpat's tales of lost tribes and international conspiracies with a Central Asian setting or connection were amongst his bestsellers, although the factor that increased the publisher's profits, that of printing fewer copies, naturally mitigated against higher sales figures. *Dainra*, his earliest novel dealing exclusively with Afghanistan, was his third highest selling novel with Hodder due to the happy coincidence of the royal Afghan visit and the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb in 1928. Published the following year whilst Afghanistan was still a popular topic in the *ILN*, *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*, sales continued strongly for ten years. This is in stark contrast to *Marches of Honour*, whose first edition

¹⁰⁰ Attenborough, p.141.

¹⁰¹ Ganpat to Blackwood, 2 April 1920, BwA, MS 30189.

dropped to single figures within three years before flickering back into life through a wartime reprint. *Dainra* did well for the booksellers and the publisher, but for Ganpat *Roads*, of all his Afghan-themed titles, boosted his income from royalties. It fell short of the £433 that he received for his first Hodder novel, *Voice of Dashin*, yet gave him £251, a few shillings more than yet another Central Asian lost tribe adventure, *Fairy Silver*.¹⁰² The titles selected for the flurry of reprints published in 1936-7 show a preference for the old staple of Central Asia and, since the conflict of 1930-2 in which he fought, Burma.¹⁰³ Ganpat's two short Burmese-set stories appeared in the *Thriller* magazine in 1935 and 1936, setting treasure and adventure against George Orwell's 1934 critique of British rule in *Burmese Days*, as writers followed the compass point of public interest in its brief swing further eastwards.¹⁰⁴

Narrating Afghanistan - close reading of Ganpat's Roads of Peace

Ganpat's *Roads* could have equally been entitled *Roads of Power*, as it is based on the belief 'that the protection of the people depends directly on the strength of the rulers'.¹⁰⁵ With Britain's appetite for maintaining her empire waning since the end of First World War, Ganpat was part of the large body of interested people, mostly from the military, who felt strongly that the expense, in terms of manpower and money, was worth paying. Arguments within the military and administration raged over the benefits of the 'forward' or 'backward' policies, differentiated by whether Britain should police the Frontier up to the Durand Line or, leaving the tribal lands to their own devices, fall

¹⁰² This was despite the latter selling 50% more copies than *RoP* and may have been due to the higher retail price of *Roads*' reprints.

¹⁰³ The titles produced as Yellow Jackets in 1936 were *Fairy Silver* (1932) and in 1937 the lost tribes and hidden treasure in Burma of *The Second Tigress* (1933), with more Burmese treasure, this time in the Himalayas, in *Seven Times Proven* (1934). The latter includes a henchman seen on the streets of Leh and casually identified by one of the British protagonists as 'Pathan I should say [...] or Afghan, much the same thing [...] They'll go anywhere to make money [...] A tough looking fellow [...] You remember Mahbub Ali in *Kim*, and his remark about having shot his man and begot his man before he was sixteen?' p.58.

¹⁰⁴ Ganpat, 'The 13 Gates' and 'The Tiger Men'; Orwell, *Burmese Days*.

¹⁰⁵ *Roads*, p.98. All further references in this section are given within the text.

back to the line of the Indus River.¹⁰⁶ Even worse, in Ganpat's eyes, were the pacifists who ignored the real threats that a soldier such as himself perceived as a daily reality. This noise from 'the "little men" whose chatter was getting louder every day in India, and, worse still, at home in England' (259) and of the 'anti-war people [...] the propaganda crowd' (299) was increasing, but the theme of this novel is that 'talk and paper won't hold the frontier' (275). Besieged by the 'insane idea [that] any kind of force is wrong according to the popular press and the successful novelists' (294), Ganpat fought back against the 'war-book craze' (294) serialised in every paper, 'designed to make out that every professional soldier has a Freudian complex for fornication and blood' (295).¹⁰⁷

Roads combines the old message of standing fast against an enemy with the Roman policy of road building as a means to subdue him. Ganpat held it essential to maintain the walls of the border forts:

under the Union Jack [...] where the sentries stood watching, always watching, their gaze on the threatening hills, from which for over two thousand years sword and flame have so often leaped downwards towards the rich lands of India, and will leap out again the moment the guard of the frontier is weakened or slackens (11).

¹⁰⁶ Ganpat's brother Arthur Vincent Gompertz, soldier and reviewer for the *Pioneer* newspaper, contributed to this debate in his *The Defence of India* published under the pseudonym 'Arthur Vincent' (London: Humphrey Milford, 1922) where he argued in favour of the 'forward' policy: 'It is for India we are to fight if needs be, in defence; and at all costs India's soil must be kept clear of the war. For this reason alone [...] it would be necessary to go across the Indus.' p.55.

¹⁰⁷ Ganpat did not specify the targets for his attack, but they may have included Robert Graves' autobiography *Goodbye To All That* (1929); Erich Maria Remarque's bestselling *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929); works from the Bloomsbury set, the high temple of modernism, such as Virginia Woolf's 1925 *Mrs Dalloway*, with its fractured war veteran's suicide; or the influence of the so-called 'Lost Generation' of American writers, such as Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell To Arms* (1929). A target more particularly connected with India may well have been Fenner Brockway (1888-1988), pacifist, journalist, parliamentarian and active member of the India League, which called for Indian independence. He was editor of *New Leader*, journal of the Independent Labour Party, from 1926-9.

The British conquerors of India, which had over two centuries swept north-westward from Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, are recast as defenders, facing Afghanistan and the Central Asian threats beyond. Their bulwark against the barbarians, must build the barrier of civilisation not only within the tribal territories, but also within the hearts of the inhabitants. This slow process is followed over the novel's eighteen-year time-span in the character of the young Ayub. In the opening chapter, this Mahsud youth kills his enemy to bring an end (or at least a temporary cessation) to the on-going feud that has destroyed his family, taking revenge in what is portrayed as traditional tribal fashion. By mid-novel, Ayub has been sufficiently influenced by British values to 'lay awake and [...] wondered whether perchance there was not something to be said for a system of government under which a man could spend his money on plough oxen, rather than on arms' (113), and by the close he claims to understand that 'the world was changing' (236), 'we do not want war [...] we want peace and service' (258).

In Orwell's *Burmese Days*, the weary and disillusioned Flory viewed imperialism as a moral pollutant, corrosive to both the coloniser and the colonised - 'we're not civilising them, we're only rubbing our dirt onto them'.¹⁰⁸ Ganpat saw only the positive side of British influence, making inroads into the tribal territories of the frontier - 'the roads in themselves spell civilisation by degrees - opening up the country - more tribesmen coming and seeing the advantages of peace. It's full circle [...] troops - roads - civilisation' (273).

For most reviewers, '*Roads* preaches firmness with understanding, strength and justice', qualities that were reflected in the 'unusual personality' of the author, who 'describes himself as a diehard, and his ideal seems to be to die in battle. At the same

¹⁰⁸ Orwell, *Burmese Days*, p.40.

time, he always takes little books of poetry with him to read on his perilous travels'.¹⁰⁹ Characteristically, Ganpat painted a touch of this idealised characteristic into one of his heroes in *Roads*, here the taciturn but romantic police officer Jock Mackintosh. The day before his death in a border skirmish, his love for the beautiful Desirée still unspoken, Jock contemplates his work, 'the old-fashioned knight's work of putting down force that men might live in peace' (177).

Perhaps it was easier to be a knight in the wild border country, for the civilisation which was viewed as such a positive influence at the edge of empire, appeared to have had a negative effect at its heart. The loyal Ayub, who fought in France during the First World War, saw the British and French soldiers in terms that have been used by the West to describe his own people, as a martial race to be admired; those who had not 'lost their manhood from comfort, but fight as men should' (151). It could hardly be otherwise for a writer and officer in Ganpat's position; it was expedient that the native should not be portrayed as either disaffected by, or disrespectful of, his imperial masters. For the British characters in the novel, the contrasts were clearer. The sparsely populated frontier is free of 'the hysterical strain that war produced in big cities in Europe, disorganised with the influx of unbalanced men and women' (137). Hysteria, that essentially feminine trait, is the domain of the West. The tribal lands of the Afghan Frontier are, like the Scottish Highlands discussed in the Introduction, distinctly male, with their scowling threat of rapacious raids on the softer lands to the south. Despite - or perhaps because of - the sense of life lived 'on the edge of a volcano' (141), this encouraged 'the dream of adventure - the lure of a man's life in a man's country [which] held more attraction than that of night clubs, jazz and the cynical so-called disillusioned talks of high-brow youth' (248).

¹⁰⁹ *Tablet*, 25 August 1931, GP3; *Daily News*, 13 July 1926 on *Road to Lamaland*, GP2.

Ganpat was aware of the modern world, full of 'the intellectual circles where people talked highbrow, criticising everything' (250-1), but does not allow it to intrude upon the story, beyond a brief appearance of Monica and Ivan Sinclair at a dinner party, idealistically spouting pacifist and feminist statements easily countered by the rest of the party. Modernity is presented as a distant metropolitan backdrop of 'highbrow talk about freedom' from the 'defeatists at home' (221), who have no concept of the people of the Frontier, these 'cheerful savages' (16) who only respect strong leaders, as 'no man serves a weakling' (55). Ganpat clearly makes his pitch for the romance side of Lang's shield, rejecting the realism that had by now subsumed into the fractured abstraction of Modernism's response to the First World War. For him, pacifism equates to weakness and, while he admires strong women, they still need to demonstrate a traditional reliance on the heroic male as evidence of the latter's innate masculinity. Reviewers recognised the dated nature of the arguments, that they were voiced by, as one character described himself, 'the old gang' (301), but considered that 'the story, old-fashioned if you will, [has] the moral drawn with conviction'.¹¹⁰ More conservative reviewers applauded this stance, believing that this strong call to maintain military strength meant 'pacifists must be prepared to disagree with it from beginning to end [which] is perhaps the best witness we can bear to the intrinsic worth and merit of an honest and well-wrought piece of work'.¹¹¹

In order to confirm the view of those serving on the Frontier, that the modern world was a temporary aberration, Ganpat contrasts it with a long stretch of historical time. The two decades covered by the storyline is anchored in the two thousand years of history reaching back to Alexander the Great, conveniently fixing the originating story to a familiar European invader and ignoring any earlier claims to the territory.

¹¹⁰ *Birmingham Post*, 7 April 1931, GP3.

¹¹¹ *Tablet*, 25 August 1931, GP3.

Jandola Fort, where the seventeen year-old Ayub first meets Dick Merrion, officer in the Black Belts, stands guard against 'the threatening hills, from which for over two thousand years sword and flame' (11) have been aimed towards the lucrative lands of India. Running parallel to the events contemporaneous to the novel itself - the First World War, assassinations and abdications in Kabul, disturbances at Amritsar and the Third Anglo-Afghan War - runs the awareness of the past, rooting the 'today' of the 1920s and 30s in a consistent and coherent narrative of threat and defence. The Frontier is portrayed as a place where 'the tribes were filled with the memories of Nadir Shah and Muhammad of Ghazni' (190) and the retreat of 1842 with its 'black shame [of] eighty years since [the British] fled from Kabul and were slaughtered to a man and their women taken' (174).¹¹²

Given Ganpat's doctrine of British pacification of the Frontier, it is surprising that more is not made of the dramatic events of the First Anglo-Afghan War. It is mentioned only by Ayub in his discussions with other men of his tribe, where the connection between the disastrous retreat of 1842 and the recent abandoning of militia outposts by the British is considered an indication of British weakness. The literary tradition of resilient British heroines surviving capture by ferocious tribesmen, with their echoes of Sale's captivity, flourishes in the more wildly romantic of Ganpat's adventure stories, but in this book he was aiming for a broader narrative arc than the snapshot of a brief encounter. He had no pretensions of writing history, and the book reads more as biography, the time span giving it a certain symmetry or congruence with the best-known story from his favourite author, taking the prototype of a journey from boyish independence to youthful collaboration, and following Ayub from teenager to

¹¹² Nader Shah, who ruled Iran from 1736-47, was renowned as a military genius, the Napoleon of Persia or the second Alexander and invaded India, reaching Delhi in 1738. Mahmud Of Ghazni, who was Emir then the first Sultan of the Ghaznavid Empire from 998-1030, an empire covering much of Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and India, invaded India some 17 times during his rule. For a helpful account of Afghan incursions across the border prior to 1839, see Preston's *Dark Defile*, pp.12-3.

adult. Kipling's *Kim* tracks the eponymous hero from young boyhood to approaching adulthood, while in *Roads* the young Ayub, 'barely seventeen' (8) in the opening chapter, is the most significant non-British character, developing from fugitive to army recruit and First World War veteran, to pro-British tribal elder and budding entrepreneur.

Kipling is one of Ganpat's strongest literary influences, often quoted in his writings, suggesting that the 'little books of poetry' claimed to accompany him 'on his perilous travels' were perhaps Macmillan's small colonial editions of Kipling's verse.¹¹³ The verses which head the four sections of the novel comprise three from the poem 'If' (1895) and one from 'Gallio's Song' (1909). Within the text, Meean Mir cantonment in Lahore was the place 'of which Kipling has sung' (31), and future concerns of upheaval in Kabul are countered with a quote 'as Old Kipling says - "the work is with us, the event with Allah"' (142). Ganpat belittles 'the picturesque language of some folk who write about the border they've only seen from Peshawar' (47) in a similar tone to Kipling, who satirised the ignorant and pompous visiting politician in his short story 'The Enlightenments of Pagett M. P.' (1890). In *Magic Ladakh*, Ganpat ridiculed the hasty ignorance of:

the erudite Members of Parliament, globe-trotters and world's workers generally, who come out here for a few weeks' holiday preparatory to writing masterly treatises on the question of India. At the end of a month they can deal with the subject exhaustively and with complete finality. I, having been out here for only some twenty-odd years, know very little about India...¹¹⁴

¹¹³ *Tablet*, 25 August 1931, GP3; *Daily News*, 13 July 1926 on *Road to Lamaland*, GP2.

¹¹⁴ *Magic Ladakh*, pp.23-24.

This approach, combining echoes of Kipling, even when not referring to him directly, was Ganpat's attempt to connect his writings to those of a successful and much loved author and poet. The message sent to his readers was of an insight into the country and its peoples that, like Kipling, 'sees things from the underside'.¹¹⁵ So for critics, whether his books related to Ladakh or Waziristan, 'his impressions [were] likely to be unhurried and undogmatic and reaching the openness of mind which is a condition of truly understanding a country so vast and strange'.¹¹⁶

Other literary texts gave the reader a familiar set of reference points. Of particular interest to this thesis is Walter Scott, champion of the historical romance and promoter (with Mountstuart Elphinstone) of the interchangeable nature of Afghan and Scottish borders. He is explicitly referenced in a young woman's reading; the literary images that result have predisposed her to the Frontier. Born in north India, Audrey 'loved hearing about India and the hairy men with long knives, who behaved as the characters of Scott's novels in which she revelled' (101). Beyond the romance that informs Audrey's expectations, Scott's and Elphinstone's writings are echoed in a discussion between two officers, one asserting that a Pathan tribesman is 'a far more virile type than three quarters of India produces [*sic*]', prompting the patriotic Scotsman to respond that 'a highlander of course is bound to dominate a plainsman' (18). Ganpat had already voiced such thoughts in his second novel, where he admired the land of:

rugged hills and mountains, of savage men who live in tough with the elemental things of nature [...] which prevent men softening and deteriorating into mere seekers of pleasure, soft-bodied, soft-clothed, soft-living travesties of humanity.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Kipling, 'King', p.99.

¹¹⁶ *Birmingham Gazette & Express*, 2 February 1928, on *Magic Ladakh*, GP2.

¹¹⁷ Stella Nash, p.118.

More than a century earlier, Elphinstone had extolled the harsh conditions that bred tough people in this mountainous region, in contrast to the Indians of the plains, 'fluttering in white muslins, while half their bodies are naked'.¹¹⁸

Ganpat takes the debate on ethnic variations in a direction far less palatable for today's readers than those of the 1930s. The wolf, as discussed in the Sale chapter, has been linked with images of invasion in Byron's poetry. Here it appears in Ayub's 'wolfish grin' (9) and lithe movements as he 'entered [the room] as a wolf enters a strange cave, every sinew taut' (14), giving the sense that the Frontier was 'wolf country' (165). The Commander considers the martial types which make up his company as components of a 'bobbery pack' of 'Oriental fighting-men', distinguishing between a Mahsud like Ayub who, 'if you took a canine analogy, was an Alsatian - innumerable good points, but ... one was never quite sure' and the Punjabis who 'were Airedales - utterly dependable and with high traditions of loyalty' (32-3).

This question of breeding is inherent in most imperial discourse from the assumed superiority of the European over the Oriental, to the Greek or Hebraic origins of the inhabitants of the north of India, where Alexander's invasion of two thousand years before has left traces more tangible than the mythology of the threatening hills. In his books Ganpat did not specifically condone or condemn mixed race relationships, but considered individuals of mixed blood, even the antagonists in his stories, to have gained more attributes than they had lost. He himself was proud of the various strands that contributed to his own mongrel ancestry, making him as much one of the 'composite beings' as his characters.¹¹⁹ The hero of *Sleepy Duke* has a blend of Norman and Saxon blood, and the advantages of this are reinforced by the opening chapter's

¹¹⁸ *Kingdom*, p.150.

¹¹⁹ *High Snow*, p.102.

admiring description of a litter of puppies, born of a 'big brown Saxon slut' and 'a great rough-coated Norman wolf-hound', one of whom will 'be sure a master dog'.¹²⁰

Ganpat gave his story a dense historical foundation, and was equally careful to place it in a solid geographical setting. Inside the cover, before the title page a sketch map credited to Captain W.E. Maxwell was bound in, covering some 100 miles of the tribal areas and administered districts lying between the Indus River and the Afghan border, from Thal in the north to Dera Ismail Khan in the south. The military detail, with boundaries, forts, battle sights and communication links, brings a strong sense of reality to the book. The events happen in a known - or at least recognisable - setting, with place names familiar from news reports of border unrest. At the end of the book, Ganpat closes the narrative with an afterword reversing the usual form of writers pleading their case. Instead of begging indulgence for too much imagination, he claims to 'have *tried* [my italics] [...] to give in fictional guise a picture of part of the Indian Frontier' and to 'have on a very few occasions transposed or slightly altered minor incidents' (319) to smooth the narrative flow. To then detail the three alterations, followed by the personal, the first hand and the written sources used, shows a concern for historical accuracy somewhat more serious than the Haggardesque fictionalised foreword he had written for *Harilek*.

Roads was marketed by the publisher as 'A "Truth about India" Novel by Ganpat' to appeal to both fiction and non-fiction readers.¹²¹ The absence of any reference to Afghanistan on the front cover, or in the description on the back, where the nearest mention is to Pathans, Mahsuds and tribal feuds, indicates the difficulties that publishers had in selling the theme of Afghanistan to the British public by the 1930s. Readers more familiar with the lost tribes, ultra-audible signals or photographic ghosts

¹²⁰ Ganpat [as Gompertz], *The Sleepy Duke* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), pp.13, 14.

¹²¹ *Times*, 21 April 1931, GP3.

of Ganpat's other books were warned accordingly, and those who had no time for fiction were invited to discover the facts. Some critics noted that the form of the novel was not well served through this treatment. It was 'a treatise on Indian frontier administration rather than a story', 'not so much a straightforward tale as an argument in action'.¹²² The result was that 'the story is slight, the actors in it sketchy' and overall 'as a novel, the book is of less interest'.¹²³ For the staunchly imperialist *Torquay Herald & Express*, it was a notable strength that:

the author has divested himself of all aids to digestion [...] dealing with facts rather than fiction. To such a book it is impossible to apply cold inapplicable principles of criticism; we know it to be only too true.¹²⁴

But for others, the thin veneer of fiction made the subject more palatable, imparting 'a greater amount of clear-thinking on the muddled subject of India's problems than is to be found in fifty textbooks'.¹²⁵ It was for them a relief to turn from the 'not always inwardly digested [...] mass of speeches, books, articles and general information and criticism on the burning question of India' to his 'enlightening novel'.¹²⁶ It is clear that the book was being marketed as a contribution to the debate around Indian independence, rather than as a literary response to the threat from Afghanistan, or the difficulties of pacifying the Frontier region.

By the time of the first reprint in 1933, India was high on the British political agenda. What the *Daily Mail* headlined 'Dangerous Days in India', the review mentioned economic depression, civil disobedience, and political and religious tensions stirred up within the nationalist movement by Britain's traditional 'divide and rule'

¹²² *TLS*, 30 April 1931; *Evening News*, 5 May 1931, GP3.

¹²³ *Evening News*, 5 May 1931, *Morning Post*, 1 May 1931, GP3.

¹²⁴ *Torquay Herald and Express*, 1 March 1933, GP3.

¹²⁵ *Manchester Evening News*, 25 April 1931, GP3.

¹²⁶ *Tablet*, 25 August 1931, GP3.

tactics.¹²⁷ This made the subject of *Roads* 'of more than ordinary interest [and] it should be read by every Englishman, and especially by those who appreciate what Empire means to us'.¹²⁸ Readers of *Roads* were exhorted that 'merely because it's difficult and sometimes unpleasant and dangerous, we've no right to clear out, to take our line from the defeatists at home who avoid everything difficult or dangerous' (221). That this message should apply, not just to the Afghan Frontier, but the whole of India, would have resonated with Winston Churchill, 'in the midst of his bloody-minded campaign against Indian autonomy', who was given a copy of the reprinted 3/6 edition in 1933 (although there is no evidence that he read it).¹²⁹

With the 1933 reprint came the recommendation from Ian Hay, as quoted above. Hay's endorsement appeared to settle the critics, and most reviews for this second edition included his glowing praise. Reviewers noted 'the old tag about the relative merits of truth and fiction' resulted in a 'book, far from being a dry-as-dust historical record, is one of the best tales of adventure we have read for many a long day'.¹³⁰ Following Hay's clarion call, critics agreed that 'although the book is in the form of a novel' it rang true as 'history brightly and sincerely written as a background to a very appealing story'.¹³¹ For the reader of adventure fiction, *Roads* successfully condensed the confusing mass of historical and political facts about the Afghan Frontier into an accessible and convincing novel.

By the second reprint in 1938, attention was focussed on the approaching Second World War. It may have been as much the decision to draw their business relationship with Ganpat to a close that decided Hodder to make full use of this

¹²⁷ *Daily Mail*, 8 April 1933, GP3.

¹²⁸ *Torquay Herald & Express*, 1 March 1933, GP3.

¹²⁹ My thanks to Jonathan Rose for his correspondence on this point; Sir Claud Jacob to Winston Churchill, 5 March 1933, enclosing a copy of *Roads*, Churchill Archives Centre, CHAR 2/192/54.

¹³⁰ *Cambridge Daily News*, 22 February 1933, GP3.

¹³¹ *Llandudno & North Wales Weekly News*, 23 February 1933; *Cork Examiner*, 8 March 1933, GP3.

patriotic, pro-military warning against 'the lengthening shadow of a new conception of power' (276). The same year both *Sleepy Duke* and his last novel, *War Breakers*, lost money for Hodder, even before copies were destroyed in the Blitz.

Had Ganpat been born a century earlier, his journal extracts and letters might have filled the newspaper columns and parliamentary discussions, as did Sale and Eyre's. His books, with their uncomplicated narratives and humorous, self-deprecating style, might have crested the wave of popular interest and become bestsellers. Born as Kipling was serving his 'seven years hard', his own thirty-six years service was a mixture of moderate military renown and mild literary recognition. Early in his writing career, and by the time of the Third Anglo-Afghan War, his readership comprised of the regulars of *BM*; in the following years he barely reached beyond that military and colonial constituency to stir the romantic imaginations of adventure novel readers. While listed as one of two 'notable commanders' of the Thal Brigade of the Indian Army prior to his retirement, his military record on the Afghan Frontier did not translate into literary success.¹³² Amongst his family and friends, but not the wider public, described him as "'the Lawrence of Arabia" of Northern India'.¹³³

The five authors in this and the preceding chapters have been redoubtably British in nationality and outlook. Their writings have been broadly supportive of the aims, if not necessarily the actions, of British influence on the Afghan Frontier and (where expedient) incursions further into Afghanistan. My final chapter considers the extent to which the nationality of a writer affects readers' perceptions, as an Indian medical missionary uses her direct experiences of frontier life to portray a borderland amenable to a sensitive British presence. With public attention shifting to more central questions

¹³² 'Thal Brigade, Presidency Armies in British India' (2013), IndiaNetzone website <http://www.indianetzone.com/66/thal_brigade.htm> [accessed 17 May 2013].

¹³³ Richard Gompertz, p.81.

of Indian independence, as well as to the growing tensions in Europe, was Afghanistan by the mid-1930s no longer the page-turner of a century before?

Writing in the Margins: Pennell's Literary Mission

My final author, Alice Pennell (1874-1951), provides a strong contrast to the redoubtable Sale and her enthusiastic popular following during the First Anglo-Afghan War. Both women lived in the Afghan frontier regions, but in 1842 Sale was a reluctant captive, central to a media storm in the Indian and British presses. By contrast, eighty years later, when Afghanistan was no longer the subject of headlines and heartache, the experiences and views of Pennell, a pro-British Indian missionary doctor, failed to translate into good sales figures for her books. The main characters in her novels, whether Afghan tribeswomen, northern Nawabs or progressive Indian engineers, are all benignly receptive to a British presence in their lands, and all influenced by a kindly British doctor or teacher, who features as an idealised reflection of her beloved husband, the famous missionary doctor Theodore Pennell. In the 1930s her literary attempt to return to Afghanistan was rejected by her publisher as a subject (combined with her sentimental style) that no longer appealed to British readers. Tracing the literary life of this writer through previously unpublished archival material, this chapter provides compelling evidence for the falling trajectory of readers' interest in Afghanistan in the 1930s.

There are parallels between Ganpat and Pennell, who were both active in their writing careers in the 1920s and 30s. They lived and worked on the Frontier at overlapping times between the 1910s and 30s, and Ganpat's last command before retirement in 1940 was at Thal, close to the Afghan border and only 30 miles from Bannu, where Pennell had worked at the mission hospital. They died 150 miles apart,

and within six months of each other, in Devon and Sussex respectively. With Pennell, like Ganpat, relatively obscure in comparison to Sale, Kaye, Henty and Kipling, I present her writings on Afghanistan through the same three approaches used in the preceding chapter. Firstly with a biographical portrait of Pennell, I demonstrate how an Indian woman from Poona came to be identified with the Afghan Frontier. Then I use the uncatalogued material in the John Murray Archive at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh to track the bibliographical record of her writings. Although the archive contains files for only two of her three titles published by Murray, the correspondence clearly indicates her struggles to have her voice heard in the literary world, and how her attempt to return to Afghanistan as the setting for her proposed fourth novel (the manuscript of which is tantalisingly absent) was rejected by Murray on the grounds that it would not sufficiently interest the reading public. Finally, I provide a close reading of her first novel, *Children of the Border* [hereafter *Children*], considering Pennell's literary interpretation of Afghanistan, its contrast with those of earlier writers in this study, and its reception by a reading public already losing interest in the Afghan Frontier.¹

Biographical - Pennell's Afghan context

Alice, or Ailsa as she was also known at home, was the eighth and youngest child of the Sorabji family. She was born on 17 July 1874 at Belgaum, two years after her brother Richard. The baptismal records of Fort Church show that her father was at that time Post Master of Belgaum. They had come from Nasik, where Cornelia had been born in 1866, and finally settled in Poona, where they lived at No. 80, Civil Lines. It was a home steeped in difference, holding fast to the distinctions of heritage, conviction and culture that triple-marked their Otherness. Her father, Sorabji Kharsedji

¹ Mrs Theodore [Alice] Pennell, *Children of the Border* (London: Murray, 1926).

of the house of Languna, was a Parsee, descendent of the small community of Zoroastrians who fled Muslim persecution in Persia a 1,000 years previously and were now settled in the Bombay residency. Cornelia Sorabji, one of Alice's six older sisters - and, through her autobiographies and other writings, one of the main sources of biographical information for the family - painted this exodus in biblical terms as the Zoroastrian 'Pilgrim Fathers setting sail for an unknown destination', a romanticised view ignoring the centuries of trade between India and Persia.² Landing in Gujarat, they were allowed to settle and keep their religion if they adopted the local language and style of dress, which they did with certain subtle distinctions, such as speaking "Parsee Guzerathi" - a debased form, but our own'.³ The 1881 Census identified some 48,500 Parsees living in and around Bombay, presently some 6% of the population of the city, the last time they would be considered a numerically significant minority in Bombay. By the end of the century the total number of Parsees in colonial India (present day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) stood at 85,500 and grew to nearly 115,000 by the early 1940s. Indian Census records for 2001 show that this number had dwindled to 75,000 (approximately 0.006% of India's total population) and predictions are that by 2021 this will be a mere 21,000.⁴

Marked as different due to their Parsee heritage, the Sorabji family developed other distinguishing marks. Their father was one of the earliest Christian converts and all the family strongly adhered to this faith. The third marker of difference was their adherence to the cultural influences of the British Raj. Both parents had been influenced from childhood by English values; Sorabji Kharsedji through his English

² Cornelia Sorabji, *India Calling: The Memories of Cornelia Sorabji* (London: Nisbet, 1935, 1934), p.3.

³ *Ibid*, p.4.

⁴ Census and population figures taken from 'Parsi' (2008), Wikipedia website, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parsi_people>; Steve Sailer, 'Parsi's Success Threatens Their Survival' (2002), Isteve website <http://www.isteve.com/2002_Parsis_Success_Threatens_Survival.htm>; and 'Parsi's - Eminent Citizens' (2001), South Asian website <<http://www.the-south-asian.com/April2001/Parsis-Eminent%20Citizens%20of%20India.htm>> [all accessed 28/11/2008]. All three of Britain's first Asian MPs were Parsees, including Dadabhai Naoroji, MP for Finsbury 1892-95.

tutor George Valentine, and Franscina Sorabji through her adoptive mother Lady Cornelia Ford, wife of the army officer Sir Francis Ford. They naturally passed this bias on to their children who were "'brought up English" - i.e. on English nursery tales with English discipline; on the English language [...] in a home furnished like an English home'.⁵ This confusion of racial and cultural identity resulted in the children having to be '*taught* to call ourselves Indians', as if it were something slightly alien that needed conscious effort.⁶ The caveat, that they were compelled by the 'wisdom' of their parents 'to learn the languages of the Peoples among whom we dwelt', did not prevent Cornelia's Gujarati language skills from needing some assistance after four years in England, nor Richard's difficulties in speaking to the Indians at the Empire of India Exhibition in London in 1895 - 'I tried to recall my Hindustani; the result was a compound of French & Hindustani [...] They were too polite to smile'.⁷ This was in contrast to Alice's linguistic ability a decade later, communicating in fluent Pushto with the patients at the hospital and clinics at Bannu.⁸

Parsees value literacy and education highly, and this was reflected in the Sorabji family, where the children were all inculcated to be high achievers, and encouraged to serve their country. Their father 'was instrumental in securing a resolution' that the newly-established University of Bombay should admit women as well as men when it opened in 1857; their mother was principal and a vital founding member of the Victoria High School in Poona, where her daughters Mary, Lena, Susie and Alice variously taught; Susie went on to establish St Helena School, Poona; Cornelia took up a short term Fellowship in English Literature at a male Gujarat College in Ahmedabad when

⁵ *India Calling*, p.7.

⁶ *Ibid*, p.7, my emphasis.

⁷ *Ibid*, p.7; Letter, Richard Sorabji to Home, 6 June 1895, BL, Sorabji Papers, mss eur F165/206 p.12. [Hereafter SP].

⁸ Richard Sorabji, *Opening Doors: The Untold Story of Cornelia Sorabji: Reformer, Lawyer and Champion of Women's Rights in India* (London: Tauris, 2010), p.406. As son of Richard Sorabji, he is Cornelia and Alice's nephew. My thanks to him for generously answering my questions on Pennell.

only 18, in order to raise funds to study at Oxford; and Richard, a lawyer, became principal of the University School of Law, Allahabad in 1909.⁹

Expectations lay heavy upon Alice, both the plans of others and the need to bring in a wage. Approaches to various missionary societies for assistance with her medical training drew a blank, with Cornelia as both mentor and family legal adviser strongly rejecting the stringent conditions they wished to impose upon Alice in exchange. In terms which today read of claustrophobia and control, Cornelia wrote in a letter home - to be read by the subject herself - that despite the missionaries' schemes 'if I have my way, little Ailsa is my prey not theirs [...] I don't want the Babe to be turned out a tight-rope walker for moral narrowness'.¹⁰ There were difficulties over Alice's studies, having failed at least one important examination. Being the youngest in a family so imbued in the ethos of education, this must have been a bitter disappointment, bringing with it the anxieties and criticisms of her entire family. At least some of the family needed lucrative employment, and Cornelia felt 'so strongly that Alice ought to be in a pension-making or saving position that I have no words in which to put it emphatically enough. [...] Alice must be a pension earning item'.¹¹

Alice's letters, written during her training at Great Ormond Street and the Royal Free Hospitals, show that she may have been physically distant from 'Dearest Home', but the stifling attitude continued. It was something she resisted in a tone of ironic humour in the face of yet another difficult (and failed) examination:

It is no use being 'blue' now, that exam must be passed - & being wretched out there helps no whit I assure you. One gets the 'blue devils' oneself, & it needs all one's hope & courage to go on day after day. Don't you think it is as hard for

⁹ *India Calling* p.2.

¹⁰ Cornelia Sorabji [hereafter CS] to Home, 7 April 1892, SP, F165/6.

¹¹ CS to Home, 8 November 1892; 1 November 1892, SP, F165/7.

me as for you? Is failure a joy to anyone? [...] Alack! Alas! [...] We can but hope for the best! Meanwhile let us all be as cheerful as the spilt milk will allow.¹²

After Alice qualified in 1905 she returned to India, and the following year, while working in the Zenana Hospital in Bahawalpur, she met Theodore Leighton Pennell.¹³ The only son of first cousins, Theodore's father died when he was 9 years old.¹⁴ Overcoming his 'early delicacy' through sport and sea air, his 'very quick brain' was put to use in his medical training at University College, London.¹⁵ The ever-present figure of his influential and affectionate mother, who moved to London to be near him through his training, strongly inculcated him with ideals of service. He offered himself to the Church Missionary Society and was sent as a medical missionary to the Afghan Frontier station of Bannu, where he lived and worked from 1893, establishing the Afghan Medical Mission.¹⁶ His mother, though deeply attached to her son, 'erred on the side of too much severity, hiding her affection and inculcating asceticism and a hard life'; her exhortation to him was to 'remember, I shall be proud of you if you die doing your duty'.¹⁷ She lived with him at Bannu, dying there at age 73 during Theodore's his first furlough in England. Whether by coincidence, or through release from his mother's strict standards and intolerant criticism of others, only fourteen days after her death, in June 1908, he settled his engagement by cablegram with Alice, then in Srinagar, Kashmir.¹⁸

¹² Alice Pennell [hereafter AP] to Home, 12 January 1904, SP, F165/207.

¹³ C.L. Innes, *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain, 1700-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.158.

¹⁴ He was also related, through his paternal grandmother, to Frederick Roberts.

¹⁵ Alice Pennell, *Pennell of the Afghan Frontier: The Life of Theodore Leighton Pennell* (1914; London: Seeley, Service, 1923), p.4.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.40.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.336.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.338.

After their wedding on 17 October 1908 at Allahabad, they travelled to Bannu where Alice settled quickly into the life of missionary wife and frontier doctor, as Theodore wrote to her sister Lena:

Alice has made me a very happy home here and we are very busy all day at one thing or another. [She] has accompanied me to two of our out-stations and delighted the people, especially the women at both places with her urbanity and medical skills.¹⁹

Many missionaries at that time liked to maintain distinctions between themselves and the people they ministered to. Theodore, renowned throughout the Afghan Frontier for his adoption of native dress, was often mistaken for an Indian. He strongly argued that the wearing of Indian clothes increases sympathy on both sides, as for the missionary, 'it enables him to realize more vividly what treatment is often meted out to our native brethren [...] and on the part of the Indians because the restraint which they usually feel [...] in approaching a Sahib is removed'.²⁰ Fortunately for his own marital harmony Theodore had long objected to the practice of treating races differently, and believed that '[a] missionary, of all people, should not have a room set apart and tacitly understood to be "for English visitors only"'.²¹

This desire to blend, to be part of their surroundings, did not change their strong Christian beliefs, but it did have a marked effect on their treatment of those amongst whom they worked. The tribesmen and women - as portrayed in Alice's fiction - warmed to the doctor who 'wore Pathan garments, and, as he came forward, he gave the familiar greeting. [...] It was not possible to be afraid of or distrust a man who spoke

¹⁹ Theodore Pennell to Lena Sorabji, 8 November 1908, SP, F165/208.

²⁰ Theodore Pennell, *Among the Wild Tribes of the Afghan Frontier* (1908; London: Seeley, Service, 1914), p.253, 254.

²¹ *Ibid*, p.255.

their own language so easily' and Alice herself quickly learned Pushto.²² Although it was unspoken, dressing in the manner of the surrounding peoples was often a matter of safety, of not standing out as threat and target against the stark frontier hills. Even the captive Lady Sale adopted a turban after her officer's cap made her a target, and her female fellow hostages hid beneath burkhas when being moved through Afghanistan by their captors. Previous fictional disguises, such as Nita's masculine clothing (both as British officer and Afridi tribesman), Dravot and Peachey (as priest and servant), or Kim (protected with walnut juice and Huneefa's spells), have been a trope of imperial superiority, allowing characters to metaphorically step into the skin of their colonial subjects without detection. Here the issue was not surveillance or escape, but an attempt to foster mutual sympathy amongst the people they ministered to; people who might find the Pennell's Christian missionary faith as distancing and alien as any number of military incursions that had taken place over the years. This desire to identify with the people they lived amongst, in terms of appearance and speech, was in marked contrast to the distinction in dress that was so important to Cornelia, especially during her stay in England. There, far from the tribal marksmen of the Frontier, her distinctive Indian dress marked her out as someone unusual, with even Queen Victoria remarking on the 'pretty colours' of her saris.²³

Alice can be seen more clearly when set against her early 'governess and protector of studies', her sister Cornelia, six years her senior.²⁴ Richard Sorabji, in his recent biography, considers this relationship, often full of jealousies, insecurities and competitiveness on Cornelia's part, a significant driving factor in Cornelia's pioneering legal work and search for recognition, both vocationally and personally. For Cornelia, control of her image (as with her colourful saris) was another area of difference between

²² *Children*, p.79, 80.

²³ *India Calling*, p.38.

²⁴ *Opening Doors*, p.17.

the two sisters. In Cornelia's many letters home, the private and familial - where she expressed her anxieties, her illnesses, and her criticisms - were placed alongside her more formal journalistic writings. Her consciously literary descriptions of a trip to the Italian Riviera or Scotland, to an art gallery or theatre, her comments on the grand houses and grand personages she has visited, and her first-hand report of Lord Tennyson's funeral in 1892, or the royal visit to Calcutta in 1906 - all were seen through a deliberately distanced eye. In this she treated 'Dear No. 80' almost as if they were the Purdahnashins she would later advise legally. She spoke from the centre of Empire - whether Oxford, London or the High Courts of Allahabad and Calcutta - to the small island of home. Her letter from Calcutta in 1906 described the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales in over 2,000 words, full of the pomp of the occasion with telling details that would identify her as an eyewitness and participant, clearly intended for future publication. By contrast, Alice's published description of the Delhi Durbar in 1911, condensed the event into less than 150 words, focusing on the 'tail end of the procession' and the 'somewhat haphazard band of frontier chiefs [...] quite without any of the gay trappings that their richer fellow-chiefs displayed'.²⁵ Seeing Theodore, 'an Englishman in a Pathan paggri' - one of the very few in the audience who applauded them - they 'gave a resounding frontier shout' in welcome recognition.²⁶ Instead of seeking the admiration of the surrounding notables, as Cornelia had done, Alice took delight in the disapproval of 'the bystanders [who] looked round to see who could be the friend of such a ragged lot of Border ruffians'.²⁷

Such descriptions demonstrate the ease and confidence of this unusual couple, and were crucial in disseminating the only image that mattered to Alice - that of her beloved Theodore, who died in March 1912 after only three and a half years of loving

²⁵ *Pennell of the Afghan Frontier*, p.441, 442

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.442.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p.442.

married life. Another doctor at Bannu, Dr Barnett, suffered severe and ultimately fatal blood poisoning, caught through a scratch from the bed frame on which an Afghan tribesman had recently died. Theodore operated to try and save him, but accidentally pricked his own finger and thus also became infected. Alice, recuperating from an operation herself at the time Theodore performed surgery on Dr Barnett, nursed her husband through the brief days of his illness until his death on 23 March, aged 44 years. Her letter to Cornelia shortly after his death spoke poignantly of their love:

I am indeed proud to be his wife. I feel I can never, never be separated from him. Love such as ours is for eternity [...] I don't think any two people were ever closer in each other's hearts & so now it can't possibly be different. [...] so now too I feel he could not let me be alone & his near presence is very sweet.²⁸

Cornelia visited Alice to comfort her, and her letter to Lena and Susie shows her constant concern to produce the 'official' version of events. The papers at the British Library contain both a hand-written letter and a typed transcription, clearly inferring that the latter (which omits the comparatively trivial mention of Cornelia's 'excruciating shoulder') was the one intended to enter the family legend, and, through the last sentence in the quotation below, forestall any challenge to Cornelia's authorised version:

Poor little Ailsa. She broke down when old Bawaji asked her if there were any children, and again she broke down when telling me about her operation. It was the only 'If only' she used 'If only I'd been up and with him he would not have operated on Dr B'. This is all about these last hours that she told me, except that

²⁸ AP to CS, 4 April 1912, SP, F165/208.

the end came quite quietly and that the others were with her then. When you see her you'll know that you can't ask any questions.²⁹

Not many questions appeared to have been asked of Alice, at least by the obituary writers. *The Times* of 25 March 1912 condensed into one sentence the fact of their marriage. The extensive tribute to Theodore that opened the July issue of *BM* also only managed to refer to this short but significant relationship, in one sentence out of its eleven pages, noting that 'he married a lady who, herself a medical graduate, was thoroughly in sympathy with his aims'.³⁰ But even in her own writings this ambiguity continued, as she absented herself from the scene, in order that Theodore Pennell's kindly light could shine without the filter or distraction of a grieving widow. Of her biographies of Theodore, the one for children has no reference to their marriage, and the one for adults deals with it in such an oblique, elided fashion that, according to her nephew, the 'one remarkable feature of the book is that she was too self-effacing to mention that she was the wife who shared Theodore's last three and a half years'.³¹

No one who has read Sale's journal would consider the 'heroine of Cabul' to be self-effacing, yet there are some interesting parallels between the two women. Their connection with the area (Kabul in Sale's case and Bannu in Pennell's) and their presence, as either camp follower or co-worker, was initiated through their husbands' work. Neither were professional authors, as were Kaye, Henty and Kipling, but both chose to use their writing skills to bear witness to important events, whether of the death of an army or of a beloved husband. Sale was married for thirty-six years, a time filled with children, cantonments and military engagements; where Afghanistan had featured

²⁹ CS to Lena and Susie Sorabji, 23 April 1912, SP, F165/208. The above confirms that the Pennells had been childless - something implied by Alice's various illnesses and previous operations, including a major operation in London in 1910, see F165/208, 24 June 1910. The son born a few days after his death referred to by Innes in the first edition of her book [p.158] (subsequently corrected) was that of the late Dr Barnett and his wife [see F165/208, 21 March 1912].

³⁰ G.K. Scott-Moncrieff, 'Dr Pennell of Bannu', *BM* (July 1912), 1-11 (p.11).

³¹ *Opening Doors*, p.404.

as a brief time of intense public interest and celebrity status, yet it was only one of many postings and leave-takings. Pennell's marriage lasted only a tenth of that time, and was marked with an almost symbiotic closeness, as she wrote to Cornelia, 'from the most trivial thing [...] to the biggest interests we shared everything [...] we never dreamt of being apart in anything'.³²

The medical mission at Bannu and its outreach into the surrounding region were Theodore's vocation, where he served with devotion and died, as his mother would have wished, 'doing his duty'.³³ As it was his life's work, so it had become her life's work, a place where she felt especially close to him after his death, and where the newly established hospital was named, not after Frederick Roberts as originally planned, but in Theodore's honour. Here people spoke of him with love and respect, sentiments extended to her as his widow; she felt she understood and was in turn understood and accepted - it was a place to return to. Her work there made her seem intrepid, brave, different from other women, from her other sisters and, importantly, from Cornelia.³⁴ All these factors, magnified by the short time she and Theodore spent together, made the Afghan Frontier a storehouse of strong emotions and vivid memories, to which Pennell memorably returned in *Children* and a later unpublished story.

Pennell continued her medical work after retiring from the frontier in 1922, with refugee work in Greece, establishing an eye clinic in Delhi, and working with refugees in London during the Second World War. She was popular as a speaker on issues of women and health in India, contributing to radio programmes and various institutes and meetings during the 1930s and 40s, as well as attending influential receptions in

³² AP to CS, 4 April 1912, SP, F165/208.

³³ Pennell of the Afghan Frontier, p.336.

³⁴ Cornelia was herself brave, intrepid and different in her struggles for the rights of her Purdahnashin and for her own recognition, but Alice's confidence whilst working in the dangerous frontier region caused her to compare herself unfavourably with her little sister: 'It's dreadful feeling a failure and *despicable*, as Alice somehow makes one feel.' Personal diary, F165/78, 31 May 1917, quoted in *Opening Doors*, p.407.

London. She travelled widely, often giving talks to audiences overseas, and made friends in many countries, including the Queen of Greece and her mother, the Queen of Romania. The uneasy relationship with Cornelia worsened when the latter supported Katherine Mayo's controversial publication *Mother India* (1927), to the outrage of many Indian women.³⁵ The perceived coolness between them surfaced when Cornelia's health deteriorated and she was sent to a nursing home, at Alice's insistence. Cornelia's friends 'felt that Alice's treatment of Cornelia was rather harsh', and condemned her as 'not a kind woman. She has always been jealous and horrid to dear Cornelia and so unsympathetic'.³⁶ Eventually Alice died - four years before Cornelia - at the Convent of the Holy Rood in Findon, Sussex on 7 March 1951, where Theodore's cousin was the Reverend Mother. Her obituary in *The Times* noted that 'she was equally at home with a queen or a beggar and an inspiration towards courageous and vivid living to all her friends'.³⁷

Bibliographical - Pennell's writings on Afghanistan

Pennell wrote two biographies of Theodore, the first of which, *A Hero of the Afghan Frontier: The Splendid Story of T.L. Pennell retold for boys and girls* (London: Revell, 1912; London: Seeley, Service, 1915) had by 1930 had reached a fifth edition. Its dust jacket is busy with scenes of high drama, like a contact sheet of stills from an exciting cinematic release. Seeley, Service had Pennell's story heading the list of the Missionary Library for Boys and Girls series, selling for 2/6, that included titles on Judson of Burma, Bishop Bompas amongst the Esquimo, Livingstone in Africa and Bishop Patterson on the Cannibal Islands of Melanesia. These books, with their

³⁵ Katherine Mayo, *Mother India* (London: Cape, 1927) is a diatribe against Hindu practices and beliefs, written by an American who was considered by many Indians to have an unpleasantly racist agenda.

³⁶ Suparna Gooptu, *Cornelia Sorabji: India Pioneer Woman Lawyer, A Biography* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.206, quoting from SP, F165/52, 15 June 1945. Alice was later appointed Receiver enabling her to deal with Cornelia's affairs, see Lee and Pemberton to AP, 3 January 1946, SP, F165/114.

³⁷ *Times*, 21 March 1951.

illustrations (photographs, plates and line drawings) show a similar use of history for the teaching of moral values as Henty's historical fictions, using dramatic events to illustrate the paradigms of duty and sacrifice, to encourage their young readers in the values of Country and Empire. Her biography for the adult market was *Pennell of the Afghan Frontier: The Life of Theodore Leighton Pennell* (London: Seeley, Service, 1914; New York: Dutton, 1914) that in Britain reached a third edition by 1923. The content of both these titles relied heavily on Theodore's own books, *Among the Wild Tribes of the Afghan Frontier* (London: Seeley, Service, 1908) and the record of his bicycle journey during 1903-4 disguised as a holy man, *Things Seen in Northern India* (London: Seeley, Service, 1912). Where in his books, the emphasis was on his subjects and his observations, in her biographies (through personal reminiscences, diaries and extracts from newsletters), the character of Theodore himself is foregrounded, until they read as hagiographies to this 'Doctor Sahib', of whom it had been said 'the presence of Pennell on the Frontier is equal to that of two British regiments'.³⁸

Although Alice preferred to withdraw behind her role, essentially that of an amanuensis, in the text of her two biographies of Theodore, where she appeared (if at all) only in very oblique terms, the issue of how her name appeared as author was important. Theodore's second book, *Things Seen in Northern India*, part of a series published by Seeley, Service in 1912, was dedicated 'to my Wife', but the far more popular *Among the Wild Tribes*, completed shortly after his mother's death, was dedicated 'to my Mother, to the inspiration of whose life and teaching I owe more than I can realize or record'. The reference to Alice in the reviews in *Geographical Journal* and *TLS* as 'Miss Pennell', with no acknowledgement that she was Theodore's widow,

³⁸ Quoted on title page of Alice Pennell, *A Hero of the Afghan Frontier: The Splendid Story of T. L. Pennell retold for boys and girls* (London: Revell, 1912; London: Seeley, Service, 1915).

dislocated her from the most important relationship she had known.³⁹ There is some consistency to this silence on the subject of Alice Pennell. That she is omitted from Maud Diver's *The Englishwoman in India* (1909), listing women serving in various functions, including as doctors and missionaries (even including a piece on Cornelia under the section on 'Pioneering Women of India'), is not surprising, as it mostly concentrates on white, British subjects, and is a collection of earlier articles, published at the start of Pennell's life at Bannu.⁴⁰ That she is left out of *Building with India*, published jointly by two American missionary movements in 1922, is less explicable. The two pages on Theodore Pennell make no mention of his widow, not even crediting her as the author of *Hero of the Afghan Frontier* in the footnotes, and a later mention of her sister Susie Sorabji does not link back to Pennell.⁴¹ Noticeably, a decade later, despite her discussions with her publisher over the motives and marketability of using a *nom de plume* for both her first and third novel, her fiction was published as 'Mrs Theodore Pennell', a decision that raised her status and credibility with her reading public in India and Britain.

Her first novel, *Children* (1926), set in the wild territory of the Afghan Frontier, is the subject of the final section of this chapter. The story follows Margalara, 'Little Pearl', as she becomes wife to Khan Zaman and mother to four sons - a constant and strong example to her family, influencing them with the gentler values of the '*Daktar Sahib*'.⁴²

³⁹ *Geographical Journal*, 44.4 (October 1914); *TLS* 10 December 1914. The review in *Academy*, 86:2181 (21 February 1914) simply lists Alice M. Pennell as the author, with no further comment.

⁴⁰ Maud Diver, *The Englishwoman in India* (London: Blackwood, 1909).

⁴¹ Daniel Johnson Fleming, *Building with India* (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada and West Medford, Mass: Central Committee of the United Study of Foreign Missions, 1922), pp.140-1, 209. More recent omissions, such as in Victoria Schofield's *Every Rock, Every Hill: The Plain Tale of the North-West Frontier and Afghanistan* (London: Buchan and Enright, 1984) or the misattribution of Pennell as Theodore's sister in André Singer's *Lords of the Khyber: The Story of the North-West Frontier* (London: Faber, 1984), p.220, are less acceptable.

⁴² *Children*, p.82.

From the incomplete records in the Murray archive, the earliest correspondence regarding this novel dates from September 1925, and from internal evidence was not her first contact with Murray. The letter plunges headlong into various instances in the story to support Pennell's insistence that 'the story really is based on fact', built around characters familiar from her work at Bannu.⁴³ The undated reader's report indicates the need for 'a vital, but not a difficult modification and revision' to cut back on Khan Zaman's war time experiences in Europe, and curtail the 'intrusion' of another character in the chapters set in Bombay, as the reader considered it 'essential that the main interest should be with Little Pearl'.⁴⁴ Where she is 'the central figure [the chapters] are charming, appealing, effective, and most successful', as 'the author has invested her with life and loveableness; and as her view of things is original - for rarely have writers on Indian or Afghan life realised as sympathetically and truthfully as here the personality of a native chieftain's wife living in the wilderness'.⁴⁵ The reader concludes that the 'spirit of delight and reality' with which Pennell invests much of the work should result in 'a very attractive book'.⁴⁶

Murray appeared to try unsuccessfully to place *Children* for serialisation in the magazine market. The only correspondence on this subject shows a decided rejection of the content, though not the style, of Pennell's writing. Demonstrating the extent to which the title of her magazine encompassed the limited outlook of the day, the editor of *Home Magazine* complained that:

I am afraid it is no good for us as it is all about natives. Although we quite like an Eastern story into which natives are introduced, it is necessary that the chief

⁴³ AP to JM, 13 September 1925, JMA, 12927/204.

⁴⁴ JMA, 12927/204, Readers Report, n.d.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

characters should be white people. I like Mrs Pennell's writing and would like to see a book by her about white people.⁴⁷

The editor did not get her wish, as all Pennell's stories had Indians at their heart, albeit influenced by significant British characters such as a doctor, major or tutor. This letter demonstrates the embedded imperial attitudes of much of British society that, by contrast, makes Pennell's writing seem remarkably flexible on issues of race, despite her deep-rooted pro-Raj stance. The hardening of such anti-native views in her potential readers over the following decade may have influenced the rejection of her fourth manuscript by Murray.

Murray ran adverts for the book in the quality British press, including *TLS*, *Edinburgh Review* and *The Sunday Times* as well as *Wheeler's India Guide*. The adverts included a somewhat fey recommendation from *Country Life*: 'A halt in the desert by an oasis of exceptional verdure'.⁴⁸ Whatever the reading public made of this gnomic utterance, it hints at the friendship between Pennell and Brenda Spender 'of the editorial staff of *Country Life*'.⁴⁹ Spender acted as unofficial literary agent for Pennell over the course of her three published novels, was the recipient of the manuscript of the rejected fourth story, and the author of Pennell's *Times* obituary.⁵⁰

A memorandum of the royalty agreement for *Children* gave Pennell 10% to 1,000 copies, 12.5% from 1,001 to 2,500 and 15% over 2,500, with British Empire Overseas sales at 4d. per copy and 15% for American and remaindered sales.⁵¹ The ledger shows that, of the 2,000 copies printed, nearly a thousand were sold in Britain at

⁴⁷ Angela Easterbrook to JM, 25 February 1926, JMA, 12927/204.

⁴⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 19 August 1926; *Observer*, 22 August 1926.

⁴⁹ AP to JM, 3 December 1930, JMA, 12927/242/CP20. Spender and Murray jointly made the decision over the title for Pennell's third book, against the numerous suggestions from the author, many as Spender acknowledged, either 'tiresomely long' or 'most unsuitable', Spender to JM, 22 January 1931.

⁵⁰ AP to JM, 27 February 1934, *Ibid*; *Times*, 21 March 1951.

⁵¹ 'Statement of Mr Murray's practice in making up accounts to authors for works on which a royalty is paid to the author', 14 September 1925, JMA, 12927/204.

the full price of 7/6, with nearly 700 colonial sales overseas, and 240 remaindered after 1934. This gave Pennell royalties of £48 and Murray a profit of £64. It is difficult to give exact comparisons with the royalty figures for Ganpat's first novel, *Harilek*, but from the Blackwood Letter files, it appears that he received £132 from American sales and nearly £200 from British and Colonial sales in the first twelve months alone.⁵² His first Afghan-themed story, *Daīnra* in 1929, gave him £251 in royalties, and he never received less than £200 per novel during his years with Hodder.

Instead of the '*Daktar Sahib*', Pennell's second novel, *The Begum's Son* (1928) [hereafter *Begum*], has an idealistic and enlightened tutor from England, John Renfrew.⁵³ That this might be an echo of Sorabji Kharsedji's tutor, George Valentine, is speculation, but C.L. Innes notes that, published four years after E.M. Forster's Indian classic, this novel 'revised [...] the 'not yet' which ends *A Passage to India*, and his depiction of an enlightened Englishman [with] greater optimism about the meeting of cultures and reconciliation of British and Indian peoples'.⁵⁴ *Begum*, dedicated to her mother Franscina Sorabji, is heavily populated with maternal figures - courageous, wise and compassionate - who guide and protect the young Sher Dil as he grows towards his destiny as Nawab of Mirapur.

The freedoms of the borderless Frontier are here exchanged for the cramped and claustrophobic spaces of the Zenana. The centre, modern and healthy, is contrasted with the periphery, primitive and poisonous. The State of Ahmadpur, home of Sher Dil's maternal family, in Central India, represents the adoption of 'modern Western methods adapted to the country' with educated and unveiled womenfolk, while the State of Mirapur 'in the far wild North [is] crude and primitive' with strict Purdah laws and

⁵² Although this figure might include royalties from his subsequent book *Stella Nash*.

⁵³ Mrs Theodore [Alice] Pennell, *The Begum's Son* (London: Murray, 1928).

⁵⁴ Innes, p.162.

'mediaeval' intricacies.⁵⁵ The Mirapur Zenana, a place of 'intrigues, deceptions, jealousies and idleness', is ruled by the Regent's wife Qulsum, 'a lady of venom [with] a taste in crime that rivals a Borgia'.⁵⁶ Her various plots for Sher Dil's destruction are countered by his loyal friends, family and servants, but her ultimate betrayal of her 'small and wizened' son, Badshah Gul provides the strongest critique of bad mothering and of sending the youth of India unprepared into the educational systems of the West.⁵⁷

While Sher Dil receives the benefits of an English tutor whose required qualifications were 'that he should be young, a sportsman, and above all that he should have a *good mother*', Badshah Gul was educated in England and Berlin in sedition and unrest, returning in time to be 'mixed up in that Amritsar business [...] inciting mobs to burn the banks and loot the place'.⁵⁸ Gandhi is shown as an ineffectual leader, whose pleas for "'No Resistance, No Violence" [...] did not at all fit in with the feelings and purpose of the impatient mob [...] bringing, alas! swift punishment as was inevitable'.⁵⁹ The novel ends with the evildoers exiled or being tracked by the security services, and general rejoicing as Sher Dil's friends attend his marriage.

This book fared worse than her first novel, with total sales of only 1,367 from the 2,000 print run. The first year's figures were lower, and the fall off more dramatic, than for *Children*, and the ledger refers to some 500 copies 'wasted' in the year after publication. Pennell received nearly £39 in royalties, but Murray made a loss of £37. By comparison, Ganpat's 1928 *Mirror of Dreams* earned him royalties of £257 and was the second highest title in terms of sales and profits for Hodder.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ *Begum*, pp.34, 35, 68.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp.56, 308.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.58.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp.65, 331, 337.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.332.

⁶⁰ 13,490 copies sold and a £200 profit for the publisher. These figures include the Yellow Jacket reprint in 1930 but not the simultaneous American publication of the first edition by Doubleday/Doran in 1928.

TLS reviewed *Begum* without great enthusiasm, stating that 'plot follows plot as chapter follows chapter, and virtue triumphs with monotonous regularity [...] Mrs Pennell, herself an Indian woman, has not been able to breathe any breath of life into the Indian women of her story'.⁶¹ The reviewer is more interested in the:

sensible warning against the unwisdom of sending Indian boys at too early an age, and without arrangements for their supervision, into the alien surroundings of English life. Too often such boys return to India despising equally the newer civilization into which they have never really entered, and the older civilization which is their birthright.⁶²

Pennell's third novel, *Doorways of the East* (1931) [hereafter *Doorways*], most directly tackles this theme of alienation, blending it with the influence of the revered *feringhi* doctor of her first novel, and the portrayal of good and bad mothers of the second.⁶³ From the romance of the Frontier and the exoticism of the Zenana, the narrative of *Doorways* deals with a family stretching over five generations and three continents, from the deeply conservative great-grandmother Mathaji to Ram Ditta's twin sons, made motherless through the political activity of his wife, Kamala.

The 'Doctor Sahib of Bannu' is revered as a guru in the family, and his principles used to resist Mathaji's desire for Ram Ditta undergo an arranged marriage. But after being educated in England and returning to India to work as an engineer, his desperate need to gratify Mathaji's dying wish propels him into a disastrous union with Kamala. The intelligence, warmth and wisdom of his sister Shanti is contrasted with the shallow and easily-influenced Kamala, whose openness to extremist views sucks her into a world of militancy and anarchy. The book is replete with oppositional views set up

⁶¹ *TLS*, 4 October 1928.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Mrs Theodore [Alice] Pennell, *Doorways of the East* (London: Murray, 1931).

with varying degrees of conviction until it becomes weighed down with the feel of a debating chamber. Innes notes that 'Pennell often assumes the discourses of race and class and empire, and at the same time questions those discourses', as polarising opinions are examined in the competing lights of tradition and modernity, East and West.⁶⁴

Ram Ditta, representing the desire to include the best of both East and West, and Kamala, representing the revolutionaries who teach how to 'paralyse the Government of the day', are locked in their troubled marriage.⁶⁵ Just as she and her friends have 'deliberately misread the words of the declared intentions of England to help India to attain her legitimate aspirations', so she realises that she has 'also imputed motives to her husband that he never had, counting on the tolerance he had always showed'.⁶⁶ Thus Pennell introduces the possibility of an ideal Raj marriage, between Britain, the husband, and India, the wife; a universal application of Pennell's very personal and specific model. Within the novel, Ram Ditta's dysfunctional marriage is beyond saving, and Kamala dies in a bombing that she, through her writings, advocated. Kamala is portrayed as the product of a half-baked education with 'no provision for moral training', and dies immolated on the pyre of terrorism; her husband can only mourn the 'beautiful traits of Indian womanhood' that were lost with her radicalisation.⁶⁷

The publication history of *Doorways* is dense with misunderstandings and recriminations. Pennell wrote to Murray in June 1930 that her new story is about 'present day problems in India', dealing with 'modern affairs, unrest and political strife'.⁶⁸ The reader's report notes that it is 'a loyal book supporting the British Raj and for that reason it should be accepted and published', and, despite it being over-long and

⁶⁴ Innes, p.163.

⁶⁵ *Doorways*, p.332.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.363.

⁶⁸ AP to JM, 19 June 1930, JMA, 12927/242/CP20.

weak in parts, 'its quality comes with its good effects as propaganda'.⁶⁹ In response to the Simon Commission report of May 1930, three Round Table conferences (November 1930 - January 1931; September - December 1931; November - December 1932) were held in London, to discuss constitutional reforms in India. Pennell, then in Kashmir and later travelling widely, was particularly keen to have the book published while these Round Table talks were taking place, but the revisions needed, and on-going discussions about the title, her possible pseudonym, and particularly the dust jacket design, delayed and confused the process. Her aim was to bring to some understanding of the differing strands of political and social opinions in India, and, with her pro-Raj sympathies reinforced by her upbringing and marriage, to posit an alternative to the anti-British pro-independence parties. Pennell was anxious to catch the tide of current affairs and begged Murray:

to bring it out as early as possible. This is the psychological moment. If you wait for the aftermath of the Round Table Conference, I fear it will be too late to get public interest [...] If one can catch [the British public] before they have lost all patience with our megalomaniac Gandhi they will perhaps read it.⁷⁰

It was not only the British public that Pennell wanted to interest. In December 1930 she was conscious that Cornelia, on a lecture tour in America speaking on the Indian situation, had been 'I gather from the papers, much in demand' and Pennell wondered whether it would 'be a good time to launch a book there, while the Round Table is sitting?'.⁷¹ It is unclear how much this reflected a straightforward opportunity to take advantage of the American market, or whether it was tinged with the subtle sisterly rivalry that usually showed itself from Cornelia's side, but nothing came of it, and Curtis Brown, the same agents who had tried to place Ganpat's early novels

⁶⁹ Reader's Report on *Doorways*, JMA, 12927/242/CP20.

⁷⁰ AP to JM, 23 February 1931, *Ibid.*

⁷¹ AP to JM, 6 December 1930, *Ibid.*

stateside, retired *Doorways* from active offer in early 1932, accompanied by a list of ten publishers who declined the book.⁷²

The issue of her name had arisen from the first letter in the file, where she claimed that 'it would be best to write under an Indian nom-de-plume' to avoid the 'inevitable' prejudice against a family 'known to be Christian Parsis, and loyal!'.⁷³ Changing from "'Falana Begum" [which] means, more or less, "Lady So and So"' that she had suggested for *Children*, here she wanted 'Koi Nahin', meaning 'Nobody', having 'written a short story for the Pen Club anthology under [that] nom-de-plume'.⁷⁴ Her reasons seem to be due less to any political identity than a deeper cultural one, as she wrote:

having an English name misleads people. One or two press criticisms on my last book showed the reviewer had no idea I was not English, and said my facts, which were all from personal or attested experience, were impossible. Please be kind enough to let me see the blurb when you send me the proof. The last one commenting on my English, as if it was unusual for an Indian to write correctly, was a great mistake. It annoyed Indians and made other people think you had to puff the language because there was no other merit in the book.⁷⁵

The issue was settled by Murray, who noted that, as Pennell, she was known as a writer, whereas 'Koi Nahin' was not, and her third novel was published, as the previous two, under the name Mrs Theodore Pennell.⁷⁶

⁷² Curtis Brown to JM, 29 January 1932, JMA, 12927/242/CP20.

⁷³ AP to JM, 19 June 1930, *Ibid.* I assume from this comment that she was considering including 'Sorabji' in her name.

⁷⁴ AP to JM, 13 September 1925, JMA, 12927/204; 3 December 1930, JMA, 12927/242/CP20.

⁷⁵ AP to JM, 3 December 1930, JMA, 12927/242/CP20.

⁷⁶ JM to AP, 30 December 1930, *Ibid.*

The design of the dust jacket caused the greatest problem for Pennell.

Travelling from Kashmir to Delhi, then to Turkey and on to Romania, her instructions on the cover illustration, even before the title and author's name had been decided, were consistent. She wanted the colour of both book and jacket to be a political statement, a 'vivid orange', 'the colour of the saris worn by Women Picketers', and not the 'peaceful blue' of her last title.⁷⁷ At first she wanted the explicit symbolism of flags:

on the jacket a flag of India going from the left hand lower corner across to the right hand upper corner; the flag is the Union Jack with the Star of India. In the folds this would appear. And right down the flag, in the lowest point of the left hand corner, a small spinning wheel, which is Gandhi's symbol. I want to have it, where all loyal Indians want all Indian activities and aspirations, under the Flag.⁷⁸

But during the second Round Table discussions, she decided that 'Conference made me feel that it would be better not to do much to emphasise the different flags', so she concentrated on the 'spinning wheel (Charka) [...] (now the sacred symbol almost of all Gandhi-ites) lying unused on its side'.⁷⁹

What Pennell actually saw, when she opened the long-awaited package from Murray that arrived at the Bucharest home of her friend the Queen of Greece, was most definitely not to her liking:

both [the Queen] and I were, I fear, horrified at the jacket [as] the spinning wheel should have been the Indian Charka of the Gandhi movement, not an Old English one. The woman's dress is wrong, the boy most unattractive. I am so

⁷⁷ AP to JM, 19 June and 3 Dec 1930, JMA, 12927/242/CP20.

⁷⁸ AP to JM, 19 June 1930, *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ AP to JM, 3 December 1930 and 23 February 1931, *Ibid.*

disappointed. It may put people entirely off. I wish I had been more insistent on my ideas for the jacket.⁸⁰

All her requests for copies to be sent to her friends and well-connected acquaintances, as well as a copy to King George V, bore the caveat to 'please remove the jacket'.⁸¹ This issue of the dust jacket was no minor matter for Pennell, she continued to complain about it in letters to Murray for some years, blaming the low sales on the 'most unattractive' illustration, claiming to have been told that 'many booksellers said the jacket put people off'.⁸² Ignoring any other possible reasons for the book not selling well, such as a slump in the market, or reader apathy with her subject or writing style, Pennell blamed Murray's choice of illustration for the low sales, which failed to reach even two-thirds of the 2,000 copies printed. Pennell received £27 in royalties, and Murray made their biggest loss of her three titles, £47, figures that were calculated and noted in the book file at the time that Pennell proposed her fourth novel.⁸³ Given Murray's losses on her second and third novels, it was, had she stopped to consider, counterproductive to persist in her long-running complaint about the cover of *Doorways*, and demand (before even sending the manuscript) a 'plain jacket' for the fourth book.⁸⁴

This lost manuscript has left sufficient trace to demonstrate the declining interest in literary interpretations of Afghanistan during the 1930s. Pennell had ventured away from the Afghan Frontier in successive books after *Children*, to a palace in north India in *Begum*, progressing outside India, to Britain and America, in *Doorways*. With the

⁸⁰ AP to JM 12 May 1931, JMA, 12927/242/CP20.

⁸¹ AP to JM, 29 May 1931, *Ibid.*

⁸² AP to JM, 4 January 1934, *Ibid.*

⁸³ Pennell's total royalties for the three titles were £112 [£6,244], as against Murray's total losses of £20 [-£1,115]. In 1931 Ganpat had two titles published, both of which dealt with the Afghan border: *Roads* with sales of 8,969, royalties of £251 [£13,940] and a profit to Hodder of £150 [£8,363], and *Marches of Honour*, 8,615, £200 [£11,150] and £111 [£6,189] respectively. All comparative prices in square brackets, converting prices from 1931 to 2011, made using the purchasing power calculator at <<http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/>> [accessed 12 September 2013].

⁸⁴ AP to JM, 4 January 1934, JMA, 12927/242/CP20.

disappointment at her voice being ignored - as the low sales indicate - she retreated in her writings from the modern, political and urban scenes, back to the familiar Frontier where she felt understood and loved. From the reader's reports in the Murray archive, it appears that *Nur Bibi* (at first titled *The Avenger*) was the story of an Afghan woman's long quest for vengeance over the murder of her husband, stabbed in the back during prayers. The same reader who reported favourably on *Doorways*, now, four years later, decided that despite the 'sincerity' and 'close knowledge' with which it was written, it 'would not make enough impression here to be worth our while'.⁸⁵ Murray's response to Pennell, that the story 'does not hold the reader's attention sufficiently', prompted further accusations that *Doorways*' 'unpleasant picture was not calculated to attract anyone'.⁸⁶ Even three years later, in correspondence regarding the remainder of her books, whilst acknowledging that 'it was an unfortunate period from 1928 for books: and specially till three years ago, for books with an Indian setting', she still considered the picture 'atrocious [...] enough to repel readers'.⁸⁷

The Book file also contains an envelope marked 'Correspondence re Mrs Pennell's new novel *Nur Bibi*', showing that by mid-1938 she had engaged A.P. Watt, the same literary agent used by Kipling and Ganpat, to propose her novel, presumably reworked and now the standard word count (its earlier shortness being another point against it). This time Murray gave it to two readers for comment. The first, the same one as previously, held by their original opinion of 'insufficient [...] appeal to English readers [and] its interest is too exclusively Afghan [...] to attract the general novel-reader'.⁸⁸ The response of the editor of *Home Magazine* (quoted above) to commissioning fiction without the main character being white had already caused problems for Pennell. Ten years later, the combination of Indian woman author,

⁸⁵ Reader's Report on *Nur Bibi*, 1938, JMA, 12927/242/CP20.

⁸⁶ JM to AP, 6 February 1934, AP to JM, 27 February 1934, *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ AP to JM, 12 July 1937, *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Reader's report, *Ibid.*

Afghan woman protagonist, and an indifferent marketplace worked against publication. The perils, drama and media storm that propelled Sale's *Journal* into a bestseller phenomenon 90 years before had faded away, leaving Murray's second reader to dismiss it as an 'obscure story', told with 'little conviction', that 'goes on, page after page, with a great deal of sentimentality and occasional "theeing" and "thouing" just to keep up the general atmosphere of Allah be praised'.⁸⁹ Murray's reply to Watt, that the book 'would stand little chance of adequate success [as] it does not hold the interest of the reader', closed the file in the Murray archive on Pennell's final literary attempt.

Watt was unsuccessful in placing the manuscript with another publisher, so whilst the matter of the dust jacket for *Doorways* undoubtedly soured the business relationship between Murray and Pennell, the rejection of *Nur Bibi* is a clear demonstration that by the 1930s, the public's interest in reading about Afghanistan had faded. Pennell's connection to the Afghan Frontier, in terms of duration and emotional ties, makes her the most expert of the six authors in this study, yet the least successful in terms of critical recognition, as sales figures and the failure of *Nur Bibi* demonstrates. Her family and social connections, her easy manner and political loyalties, the status of an establishment publisher - none of these factors could outweigh the indifference towards Afghanistan. Considering the hits for Afghanistan in *ILN* during the 1920s and 30s, the five years up to the publication of her first novel shows only 17 in total. Ganpat had taken advantage of the small surge of interest raised by the visit of King Amanullah Khan and Queen Soraya in 1928 (when the hit rate rose to 50) to write *Daïnra*, but in the final five years of this study, when Murray twice rejected *Nur Bibi*, the total number of hits was only 32, the same as for 1929 alone.⁹⁰ Through a

⁸⁹ Reader's report by George Kinnaid, JMA, 12927/242/CP20.

⁹⁰ Comparative figures for *The Times* are 416 hits for 1922-26, 1928 (330), 1929 (319) and 1935-39 (345). For the *Daily Mail*, 1922-26 (190), 1928 (377), 1929 (217), 1935-39 (68). This peak of interest in the royal visit, sharper in the *ILN* and *Daily Mail*, shows an affinity between them that may be connected to their greater emphasis on society and celebrity themes than *The Times'* focus on politics and business.

combination of distance, bad timing and miscommunication, Pennell missed her opportunity to have her narratives of Afghanistan read more widely.

Narrating Afghanistan - close reading of Pennell's Children of the Border

With all the texts covered in this thesis, even the more fanciful stories such as Nita's cross-dressing escape (Henty), Dravot and Carnehan's quest (Kipling) or the mythical events of two thousand years ago in *Dainra* (Ganpat), the authors have consistently claimed to write with an authenticity underlined by their personal experience, or access to historically accurate sources. Sale's attempt to 'out-truth' her fellow captives was based on her claim to have the only journal to survive the retreat with its contemporaneously written entries intact, and Kaye made use of a wide range of private and official documents to put together his history, which itself was a source for Henty. Kipling relied on his powers of observation and imaginative description to create a convincing world in his fiction, and Ganpat set his stories in places in which he had lived and worked.

Similarly, Pennell's early letter to Murray emphasises the accuracy of her depictions, using 'facts that occurred to [her husband's] patients [and] incidents that I am familiar with in every day life on the Frontier'.⁹¹ Characters, whether 'typical figures' or 'taken from a real woman', and events, 'real things, but not in that conjunction' have been 'altered and changed a little of course' to fit the demands of the story.⁹² It certainly convinced the reviewer of *TLS* who admired:

an exceptionally true and vivid novel [...] Mrs. Pennell evidently has an intimate knowledge of tribal custom and motives of action, but in spite of this has

⁹¹ AP to JM, 13 September 1925, 12927/204.

⁹² *Ibid.*

faithfully borne in mind her duty to the novel-reader. [She] makes good use of some odd facts about tribal feuds.⁹³

Any element of truth picked up by readers would have been reinforced through other, previous literary interpretations of Afghan Frontier life. For Pennell's audience, a key text was Kipling's popular novel *Kim*, published twenty-five years earlier. A seminal scene from that book is Kim's delight in life as dawn breaks on the Grand Trunk Road, with the noises and smells of his fellow travellers and 'new sights at every turn of the approving eye'.⁹⁴ Pennell's scene is far less populous, with just three adults, two camels and eleven-year-old Margalara, who:

tripped gaily beside the dignified chief. Every fold of her little *chadar*, every flirt of her voluminous *kurta*, seemed to breathe suppressed excitement, and it was with difficulty she kept her face decorously hidden behind her veil, when she really wanted to share her joy in this great adventure.⁹⁵

Where Kipling placed his child 'in the middle of it, more awake and more excited than anyone', Pennell stows Margalara in one of the camel panniers, where 'a little heart was bursting with joy at this glorious happening, this going out into the great world' (13).⁹⁶ This was no stuffy, uncomfortable mode of transport such as during the retreat and captivity, in which Sale disdained to be enclosed and bent double.⁹⁷ Here the girl was 'perched high whence everything could be seen' (13), in a joyous surveillance akin to Kim's immersive experience, and to the lama's spiritual one, when

⁹³ *TLS*, 5 August 1926. Apart from a précis of the story, the review was mostly taken up with the novel's Foreword by Sir William Birdwood and references to the late Theodore Pennell. Yet again this demonstrates Pennell's lack of visibility as an author.

⁹⁴ Kipling, *Kim*, p.103.

⁹⁵ *Children*, pp.11-12. [All further references in this section are given within the text].

⁹⁶ *Kim*, p.104.

⁹⁷ 'The conveyance was a particularly small one of the kind [...] not one foot and a half square; and I found (being rather a tall person) the greatest difficulty in doubling up my long legs into the prescribed compass'. *Journal*, p.330.

his soul went 'wheeling like an eagle' to survey 'this great and beautiful land'.⁹⁸ That Margalara is a character idealised to the point of blandness - beautiful, kind and warm-hearted in contrast to the impish, inventive and curiosity-driven Kim - makes further comparisons invidious, but the opening chapter is at least an unconscious tribute to Kipling's bestselling book, even if not a conscious pastiche of it.

Unlike Kipling's tinge of ambiguity, Pennell shows British influence within India as relentlessly positive, presenting her main British characters in almost celestial colours. The doctor features in the early part of the story, as the small family group of father, mother and Margalara journey towards the medical mission, where they believe the '*Feringhi* of whom men tell such wonderful tales' (21) will be able to heal the mother. She dies before they reach the hospital, but her husband, Mani Khan, is healed by this doctor, a paragon of kindness and virtue, held forever after as an example of the possibility of friendship with the British, and as a talisman against the worst excesses of border violence.

This violence is attributed almost exclusively to the Afghans or the German spies. The British major, who offers friendship and understanding to Khan Zaman in the second half of the story, is as idealistic and restorative a figure as the doctor. The British are portrayed as protectors of the Frontier (and of India) in much the same way as Ganpat writes in *Roads*, bringing justice, stability and prosperity through selfless sacrifice, rather than the earlier, private and less sanitised image of a bitter, wounded 'hired assassin' in Ganpat's letters to Blackwood.⁹⁹ Even in military matters, Pennell shows the British to be principled to the point of stupidity, according to Afghan observers, who 'taunted them [for not using poison gas] and said it was because they did not know how to make it [when it was] because it was not sanctioned by their rules of

⁹⁸ *Kim*, pp.193, 411.

⁹⁹ Ganpat to Blackwood, 2 April 1920, BwA, MS 30189.

warfare' (272). Whilst Margalara's husband Khan Zaman is overseas, having enlisted to fight for the British in the First World War, their eldest son Sher Zaman is reluctantly involved in an Afghan raid. Unable to attack the fort at Thal, the raiders turn their attention to a nearby mission hospital, an action viewed by Sher Zaman with horror as a 'piece of brutality and brigandage' (198), repulsed by British troops and their aeroplanes, who honourably refrain from shooting the retreating raiders.¹⁰⁰ The retelling of this skirmish as an eye-witness account from the Afghan side makes it an interesting parallel to Ganpat's descriptions in *BM*.¹⁰¹ The incident referred to in Pennell's book appears to be the attack on the hospital that she described in a newsletter for the Afghan Medical Mission at Bannu, which resulted in the death of a colleague Mehr Khan, the kidnapping of his young son, and was part of the unsettled nature of the Frontier at that time.¹⁰²

Margalara's husband, the dashing brigand Khan Zaman, having enlisted in the *Angrez* army on the promise of 'some good fighting' (171), serves in France and Mesopotamia.¹⁰³ He returns to India depressed and confused by his experiences over 'the *black water*' (172), then malaria, requiring hospital treatment, and national unrest following 'the Amritsar troubles [when] Indian troops [...] were needed all over the country' (219) delay his return home. He is not directly involved in quelling the riots but aimlessly waits in Bombay as 'war and life abroad had spoilt him for the simple life of the Frontier' (219). Rescued through the understanding of a British major and the platonic friendship of a Polish émigré courtesan, he finally returns home only to die wild and free in a tribal battle. The book ends where he has fallen with Margalara's

¹⁰⁰ Sher Zaman's escape from the actual fighting due to his being wounded is reminiscent of Henty's tactics used to keep his fictional young lad away from the historical battles and skirmishes in his stories.

¹⁰¹ Ganpat, 'Mahsudland 1919-1920', *BM*, October-December 1920.

¹⁰² *Newsletter of the Afghan Medical Mission, Bannu*, January - April 1915, pp.2-3, SP, F165/208.

¹⁰³ This is the very conflict, the First World War, which distracts readers away from Afghanistan as a subject of interest, and focuses their attention instead on the far greater carnage mainly taking place in Europe.

loud and poetic lament echoing through the surrounding mountains. The final words repeat the opening ones: 'Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!' (320), words which have resounded at key points in the story. Given the circumstances of Pennell's life, the death of her husband and her sense of loss, some of her own sentiments may be read into this closing paean to the strength, honour and courage of a beloved husband. The very call to prayer brings Theodore alive in a very specific manner, rewriting a powerful literary image of him created in *BM*. Scott-Moncrieff wrote of how:

In 1908 [...] I met him, for the last time, at the Queen's Hall in London. Two other men had spoken before him, [...] each telling pathetic tales of suffering humanity and inadequate resources to meet it. Then came Pennell. He strode to the front of the platform and made the hall ring with the Arabic 'Kalima' or Moslem creed, in perfect imitation of the sonorous mullahs in many a mountain mosque. I do not know what else he said, for the wild chant was like the 'call from the wild', making one forget London with its tame civilisation, and bringing back with ineffable force the free frontier life with its danger and fascination.¹⁰⁴

For Scott-Moncrieff, it recalled something already imprinted upon his memory. Perhaps, for other readers, their receptivity to the text depended on how far Afghanistan had been imprinted upon their memories or their imaginations. Did either Kipling or Ganpat read Pennell? Correspondence between Cornelia Sorabji and John Lockwood Kipling shows that Rudyard Kipling had read at least one of Cornelia's books, and Ganpat's correspondence shows his awareness of rivals such as Maude Diver.¹⁰⁵ The

¹⁰⁴ Scott-Moncrieff, p.10.

¹⁰⁵ John Lockwood Kipling to unknown recipient, undated, envelope marked 'To Lady Richmond, Oxford, 10 November 1954', SP, F165/198, 'By the way the Mother gave him some of Miss Sorabji to read and he finds it as I did, very good - 'splendid' he said in parts and is inclined to prophesy a great success for her. I feel sure of it for you see she knows so much more than other people and has many

trend through the 1920s and 30s reflected the political realities of British disengagement from Afghanistan following the Third Anglo-Afghan War. Readers looked for fiction set away from the wild territories bordering the old imperial 'Jewel in the Crown' and towards the cities of Europe and America, jazz-filled and modern, populated with 'white people' rather than "'theeing" and "thouing"' Pathans.¹⁰⁶

Murray's rejection of Pennell's fourth novel provides the final, falling note of the trajectory I have traced throughout this thesis. By ending (as I had begun) with a woman author, my analysis of the public responses from readers and the press to both Sale and Pennell reveals the contrasts between the opening and closing years of my 1839-1939 study. Both imperialists at heart, following their husbands across the dangerous ground of the Afghan Frontier to face conflict and death; Sale was lionised in the press and her journal was a bestseller while Pennell, almost unknown despite her famous husband and well known family, squabbled with her publisher over a dust jacket. The contentious events of the First Anglo-Afghan War made for exciting reading, the heroes of the Second gave the literary giants great copy and good sales, but by the 1920s and 30s, my research has shown that there was no longer a market for narratives about Afghanistan.

gifts as a writer.'; Ganpat to Blackwood, 18 March 1924, BwA, MS 30610, 'I'm afraid Mrs Diver has done me with her *Lonely Furrow*, the very plot I have been thinking over for another novel'.

¹⁰⁶ See quotations on pp.264, 274 above.

Conclusion

I use the detailed case studies of the previous six chapters, examining and testing correlations between the authors, their texts, their readers and the historical events mediated through the newspapers, to demonstrate the central claims of my thesis: that the popularity of narratives about Afghanistan rose and fell on a trajectory over the century from 1839 to 1939, and that this trajectory closely tracking the media interest in Britain's involvement in that country. The literary representations that I have presented, fed (and fed upon) the public perceptions of Afghanistan generated in the media.

The Afghan Frontier had, since 1815, featured in the literary cultures of both Britain and Anglo-India, through parallels drawn with Scotland. Before the Army of Occupation crossed the Indus to escort Shah Shujah to Kabul and restore him to the throne, Elphinstone's *Kingdom* and other accounts were read through the filter of a rugged Highland romance of authors like Scott. Within this setting, shocking and dramatic events such as the retreat from Kabul and the captivity (1842), or later the British Resident's murder, the defeat at Maiwand and the march to Kandahar (1879-80) played out with all the melodrama of a triple-decker pot-boiler, the cliff-hanger lure of the serialised story, or the caricatured theatricals of Astley's Circus. Even when the narrative was transformed into serious historical accounts, readers held in their imaginations the wolfish mask of the tribesman, with teeth as sharp as mountains tops, lurking beneath the fragile veneer of the text.

When Hans Robert Jauss discusses the horizon of expectations evoked in a reader by a particular work, his theory concerns the extent to which reader's

preconceptions are confirmed or challenged by the text.¹ This thesis does not deal with fundamental innovations in literary style or startling introductions of unique genres, but in the context of this book history study of literary interpretation of the Afghan Frontier, the concept of a horizon line of reader responses to the writings I have covered is an interesting one. Apparently resistant to the radical new literary styles and forms (such as modernism) that had developed over the hundred year's span of this study, the writing styles and the themes of my authors remained remarkably static. This was in contrast to the advances in the actual machinery of war they described, from muskets to machine guns, from poshteens to puttees and from camels to aeroplanes. The dramatic tales of heroism and disaster in a wild and dangerous territory did not change, but from the readers of 1842, who in 'tremulous expectancy stood on tip-toe with such intense eagerness to catch the first sound of each coming rumour', the public interest in Afghanistan declined to a point where, in 1938, John Murray rejected a work as 'too exclusively Afghan [...] to attract the general novel-reader'.²

When Sale's *Journal* was published, hard on the heels of Eyre's book, it was released into a market primed and eager to read her memoirs. Her name, situation and character had been a compelling subject of discussion amongst the British and Anglo-Indian reading publics, dismayed at the failures of military and political leaders. Her 'celebrated letters' had been endlessly reprinted in national and local papers, complete with admiring editorial comment. Kaye built upon his readers' knowledge of the disasters at Kabul for his novel, but it was with serious ambitions as a historian that he assembled and wove together the narrative threads from so many sources into his 1851 *History*.

¹ Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*. See particularly Chapter 1, 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory'.

² 'The Administration of Lord Ellenborough', p.508; JMA, reader's report, 12927/242/CP20.

Henty may have paid lip service to the disciplines of history, but his wildly spinning improbable tales were compiled at a rate reminiscent of his previous job as a journalist. Afghanistan was, for Henty, simply one of many places where a chapter in British history had been, and indeed was still being, written. Kipling, by contrast, was the Anglo-Indian insider. His training in journalism was something he shared with Henty, but, having never been a war correspondent, he subsumed the actualities into the intense and emotional response to a mythical Afghanistan in 'King'. In *Kim*, effectively a distillation of Kipling's India written from the safety of Britain, the mountainous frontier is the final challenging 'game' that precipitates Kim into the void of adulthood.

By the time of the Third Anglo-Afghan War, the attention of Britain and her reading public was focussed nearer to home, on the painful losses of the First World War. With the British Army suffering more casualties on the first day of the Battle of the Somme than those who died during the Retreat in 1842, the scale and proximity of the European conflict relegated Afghanistan to a minority interest. The figures for *ILN*, *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* show that there was more public enthusiasm for Afghanistan in the late 1920s, with King Amanullah and Queen Soraya's visit to Britain and their subsequent abdication, than in the brief conflict of 1919.

Against this dwindling enthusiasm, Ganpat's heroic romances and fantasy adventures could not compete. It was not only a matter of the British marketplace, for the Hodder ledgers show the colonial sales dropping steadily over 24 years, with no apparent increase in sales for those stories set in the *Indian subcontinent*. Pennell started from the lowest baseline of sales figures of all the authors I have studied here, and even the 2,000 print run for each of her three novels left copies to be remaindered. The readers' reports in the Murray archives demonstrate a distinct lack of enthusiasm for both Afghanistan as a subject, and Pennell as a novelist.

The enthusiasm for reading about Afghanistan was, during the time period of this study (as it is today), predicated upon its relevance and visibility in the public discourse. This discourse is primarily guided and fed by the steady diet of news and opinion produced by the press. The daily and weekly newspapers, the monthly and quarterly journals and reviews, gave readers access, not just to basic facts, but to debates that informed of other lives, other classes, other lands. Stories could be told, disputed, confirmed or exposed by a multitude of editorial and correspondents voices. The 'conversations' in the media, whether between journalists and readers, or between editors and contributors, influenced the narrative portrayal of Afghanistan in two crucial and interrelated ways. Firstly, for the consumers of these narratives, there was an intense interest in the dramatic events that were presented to them, and a familiarity with the literary conventions (that combination of writing style and political opinion) with which they were presented. But whilst the 'horizon' of historical context may have been interpreted in a fairly consistent way in the narratives I have considered over the period of study, the relationship between this and the more fluid attention of the reading publics - an attention dictated primarily by the media - shifted in direct relation to the level of news coverage on Afghanistan.

The second way the press influenced the narrative portrayal was that for these authors, especially those rooted in journalism, being part of the on-going debates surrounding British military presence in Afghanistan, made it easier, as a known participant in the literary milieu, to gain the attention of publishers. These authors were already active in the worlds of writing and publishing; they were familiar names in the debates and conversations in the newspapers and periodicals. The discipline of deadlines, and the quick responses to the immediacy of events, helped those journalists and contributors take advantage of any rapid surge of public interest. I have shown how the intense media attention paid to Sale propelled her *Journal* into best-seller status.

Kaye, Henty and Kipling exploited their connections with newspapers and periodicals. Ganpat found the path to publication for his early novels smoothed by his contributions to *BM*. Pennell is an example of an author missing these important links to the media. Unlike her more famous sister, she did not contribute to any mainstream journals, thus lacking both a robust relationship with an editor, and an underpinning of reader recognition.

Consideration of the different genres studied formed a significant strand within the first section, where Sale's memoir, with its personal, eyewitness testimony, was adapted or absorbed into Kaye's authoritative history. Here it is interesting to note the attributions of gender to these genres. The memoir is associated with the diary, the journal, the commonplace book of earlier times, where the recording of daily events is designated on the small, the domestic and, *ergo*, the relatively trivial scale. Such concerns have been considered the natural habitat of the female, whilst the papers of government, the war reports and the state declarations are the territory of the male. In his review of Harriet Martineau's *History of England*, Kaye witheringly noted the sections where Martineau tried to speak in the masculine arena of foreign military engagements, where she 'has been compelled to pause in her quiet journey along paths of domestic improvement, to turn aside, to trace the progress of great and sanguinary wars in remote regions of the habitable globe', before he castigated her many factual inaccuracies.³ Five years earlier, in his review of the Anglo-Indian reception of Sale's and Eyre's accounts, he drew attention to the fact that 'the work which suffered most severely from this critical manipulation, was that written by the Lady'.⁴ Kaye's surreptitious attack on Sale for her trespass into historical writings, can be read as simply a defence of his territory from potential rivals, but I believe it demonstrates the

³ 'Miss Martineau on the War in Afghanistan', p.341

⁴ 'Eastern Captivity', p.431.

normative attitudes of readers in the mid-nineteenth century towards women's writing, critical of that which moved from the domestic and personal into the arena of business, politics and war.

Again, it is the implications of gender-specific writings, and of some of my authors' attempts to cross that hazy boundary, that redefines the realist/romance novel debate. As none of the authors here have written with the purpose of 'the unrelenting exclusion of exciting events and engaging narrative' (Lang's definition of the realist novel), the contrast shifts to the extent to which the authors and their readers define these romance-oriented texts as masculine or feminine.⁵ Showalter notes that 'writing for boys meant *not* writing for girls', creating a space where 'male writers were safe from the schoolgirl, the Iron Maiden, and most important, the female literary rival'.⁶ Henty complicates this conclusion: while writing for his 'Dear Lads', he was aware that their sisters were also eager readers, yet, significantly, 'Daughter' was one of his rare stories written 'expressly for a female audience'.⁷ There was some discussion amongst critics of Ganpat's early novels on his gender, due to the ambiguity over his pseudonym as well as the content of his writing, with its revelations of 'women's foibles'.⁸ He was later exhorted to 'leave women out' and stop writing for 'the "little typist" at whom we are all exhorted to aim all works of art'.⁹

Although the concept of the 'highbrow', 'middlebrow' and 'lowbrow' was not comprehensively defined until Q.D. Leavis' influential *Fiction and the Reading Public* in 1932, my selection of 'popular narratives' situates my writers in a broad middlebrow category. In my examination of the popularity of a work, the 'brow' is perhaps less

⁵ Lang, p.688.

⁶ Showalter, pp.80, 81.

⁷ McMahon, p.168

⁸ *Scotsman*, 24 April 1924, GP2.

⁹ *Yorkshire Post*, 8 April 1931, GP3.

important than the sales figures. If authorial intentions can - or should - be known, my authors appear more concerned with writing a bestseller than a work of enduring literary merit. Sale and Eyre needed to recoup the financial losses resulting from their captivity. Kaye's letters to his publisher refer to his pecuniary embarrassments. Henty's critics have noted that what he gained in numbers, he lost in literary status. Kipling was not secure from banking collapses and partnership difficulties. Ganpat was desperate for his writings to enable him to leave the army and return home to his family, and Pennell, while left financially comfortable in her widowhood, may have been driven by competition with her sister's more lucrative literary career.

Considerations of literary status, the 'art' side of my analysis, have been usefully grounded by the bibliographical evidence of commercial success or failure. This 'money' side has been drawn from publishers' archives, where sales figures and correspondence have been essential in establishing the popularity of the various narratives. Without any direct evidence on the route to publication of Sale's narrative, the letters from Eyre's querulous brother to Murray provide an insight into the expectations of a publishing success. Even without any hard figures beyond 1917, Blackie's sales ledgers allow comparison of Afghan-based stories with Henty's other works. Similarly with Ganpat, Vera Douie's book of press cuttings can be read to more purpose when these reviews are situated next to Hodder's ledgers. For Pennell, the lingering bitterness over the dust jacket design of her third novel prompted more detailed correspondence on her unpublished fourth novel, allowing a glimpse of the aporia that is *Nur Bibi*.

My final research question, on paratextual ways of narrating, emerged from my detailed research into newspaper archives on the responses to the First Anglo-Afghan War. For months the survivors of the retreat from Kabul were held captive, with the

outcome uncertain. Sale's letters, widely circulated in the press, played a considerable part in drawing attention to their plight, but the emotional responses of the public, particularly the distant audience in Britain, spilled out beyond the confines of the printed word. Newspapers advertised sheet music and poetry on Kabul or the captivity, and reported exhibitions of visual art, some arranged as panoramic 'dissolving views'. Once the captives had been released, the appetite for the dramatic was stimulated by shows such as those produced by Astley's Circus, with - according to Punch - such a mixture of comedy and pathos as to be close to caricature.

The Second Anglo-Afghan War was a more business-like, military campaign than the earlier conflict. The British Envoy Cavagnari was murdered at his Residency, but as there were no British women and children imperilled in the mountains, the response was cooler and less emotive. Here, the relatively new technology of the photograph came to the fore, and the Irish photographer John Burke (1843?-1900) produced a stunning visual record of the campaign. Exhibited and reproduced in book form, these images allowed the public to 'read' the war in a pictorial sense, adding to the collective visualisation of Afghanistan that was being created by such popular papers as *ILN*.¹⁰

The Third Anglo-Afghan War coincided with the growth of the moving pictures. An article on 'The World of the Kinema' appeared in *ILN*, with stills from the Hollywood film, *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935), a write-up of the production process, and the conclusion that 'the picture not only entertains, but transports us in

¹⁰ In 2011, Tate Modern, London, exhibited a selection of Burke's photographs, juxtaposed with Simon Norfolk's images from his trip to Afghanistan in 2010. The resulting book, Simon Norfolk, *Burke + Norfolk: Photographs from the War in Afghanistan* (Stockport: Dewi Lewis, 2011) is a fascinating comparison of the two photographers' recording of Afghanistan at war.

imagination to the "Marches of the North-West".¹¹ The film starred Gary Cooper, was nominated for seven Academy awards, and listed by the National Board of Review as one of the top ten films of 1935. A.E. W. Mason's most famous empire novel, *The Four Feathers* (1902), was frequently adapted from 1915 onwards, and, whilst that was set in the Sudan, Mason also wrote *The Drum* in 1937, featuring the fictional Afghan Frontier state of Tokot. Here, Carruthers, a political agent charged with setting up a mission in Tokot, hopes for 'the chance to write a memorable name like Robertson's or Durand's or Warburton's on the records of the Frontier'.¹² The film (with the Welsh hills standing in for Frontier landscape) appeared in 1938, directed by Zoltan Korda, who went on to direct his version of *The Four Feathers* the following year. *The Drum* featured in a series of films produced by Alexander Korda that 'indicates a definite Near Eastern and Middle Eastern adventure cycle, though on traditional empire-building lines', and was involved in a cultural tussle with American film industry, as while '*Bengal Lancer* seems almost to have secured for Hollywood what may be called the film rights on British Imperialism; *The Drum* has ensured that there will be no such monopoly'.¹³ This sudden glut of films, continued with the 1939 adaptation of Kipling's *Gunga Din* starring Cary Grant and Douglas Fairbanks, indicates a brief but intense interest, in the pre-Second World War period, for narratives of the Afghan Frontier that could be adapted for the screen. It even touched Ganpat, as shown in the short and inconclusive exchange of letters involving Blackwood, Watt and Max Weintraub, regarding the film rights to *Harilek*.

In summary, at the end of my introduction I somewhat fancifully likened the investigations of my thesis to the methods used by the Great Trigonometrical Survey of

¹¹ Michael Orme, 'The World of the Kinema', *ILN*, 9 February 1935. John Masters lampoons Hollywood's version of India as based on a jumbled patchwork of impressions gained from 'The Bhagavad-Gita and the works of Maud Diver and Rudyard Kipling', Masters, p.155.

¹² A.E.W. Mason, *The Drum* (1937; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1941), p.9.

¹³ *Manchester Guardian*, 16 June 1938.

India. I had imagined that the first and second points of triangulation, that of the writers and of the readers, would not only be the foci but also, of themselves, provide the answers to my research questions. Having considered the rise and fall in reader interest in narratives of the Afghan Frontier, and the negotiations between authors and publishers in their search for a bestseller, I come to the conclusion that the key to the literary interpretations of the historical events of 1839-1939 lies in the hands of the reporters and editors of the local, national and international media.

When Jauss wrote of 'an important work' being 'surrounded by an unsurveyable production of works that correspond to the traditional expectations or images concerning reality', he did not condemn the mass against which the single text shone so brightly. He claimed that this large swamp of mundanity should be 'no less valued than the solitary novelty of the great work'.¹⁴ My thesis has not contained many 'great' works, although some, such as Kipling's stories, have gained critical acclaim along with their popularity. I have been concerned with the efforts of particular authors to propel their literary interpretations of Afghanistan to the attention of the reading publics. Where I disagree with Jauss is the extent to which such efforts are 'unsurveyable', or that they are limited to the book format. From reports in *Hansard* to adverts for circuses and cigarettes, from Rawalpindi durbars to the bookshelves of public schoolboys, and from squabbles about jacket design to the night-time bombing of London, I have carefully followed the book history threads to trace the rise and fall in popularity of these frontier narratives.

Where the works published in book form would, in isolation, have reached a very select audience, I contend that without the influence of the press on the readers' expectations, the authors' choices of subject matter, and the publishers' sales techniques,

¹⁴ Jauss, p.12.

the books would have had minimal impact. The daily or weekly conversations, between the mass volume papers and periodicals and their readers, can appear, when single articles or individual letters to the editor are inspected, as so much inconsequential 'chatter'. Yet where the physical newspapers themselves were thrown away or redeployed in household tasks, the steady accretion of presented news, of opinion and critical views, seasoned the minds of the various reading publics, developing a taste for particular narratives, the flavour of which authors captured or missed at their peril. Without considering the influence of the press on how popular narratives of the Afghan Frontier were written and read, it would have been impossible to read so widely between the lines of evidence uncovered by my research.

It was a sharp curve from the drama of 1842 and the media sensation of Sale's letters, through the peak of interest in Roberts and his fellow officers in 1880, to the steep fall towards the near indifference of the newspapers to the events of 1919 and the low sales of the resultant narratives of the Afghan Frontier in the 1920s and 30s. Popular appetites for literary representations of Afghanistan follow closely on press reports of real life events - how exciting or appalling their coverage in the newspapers, how controversial the debates, and whether any British interests are at stake. From the late 1930s there was to be a fallow period of some eighty years, with only occasional titles to test the market. Since then there have been numerous conflicts in Afghanistan but, unlike the 1979 Soviet invasion, it is only since 2001 that Anglo-American imaginations have finally reengaged with the region. The falling towers and falling bombs that heralded yet another war in Afghanistan have steadily increased the popularity and financial viability of both reprinted and new narratives on this troubled region, beginning another trajectory to be examined in future studies.

Appendix

The three graphs on the following page are used to illustrate the rise and fall of interest in Afghanistan, as reported in a selection of popular newspapers. Of the three titles, only *The Times* fully covers the time period of this thesis, as the *Illustrated London News* was first published in 1842, and the *Daily Mail* in 1896. The graphs represent the number of 'hits' (arranged in units of five years) for the search term 'a*fghanistan' extracted from the three databases given below:

The *Illustrated London News* Historical Archive 1842-2003 website

<<http://find.galegroup.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/iln/start.do?prodId=ILN&userGroupName=tou>> [accessed 14 October to 10 November 2011]

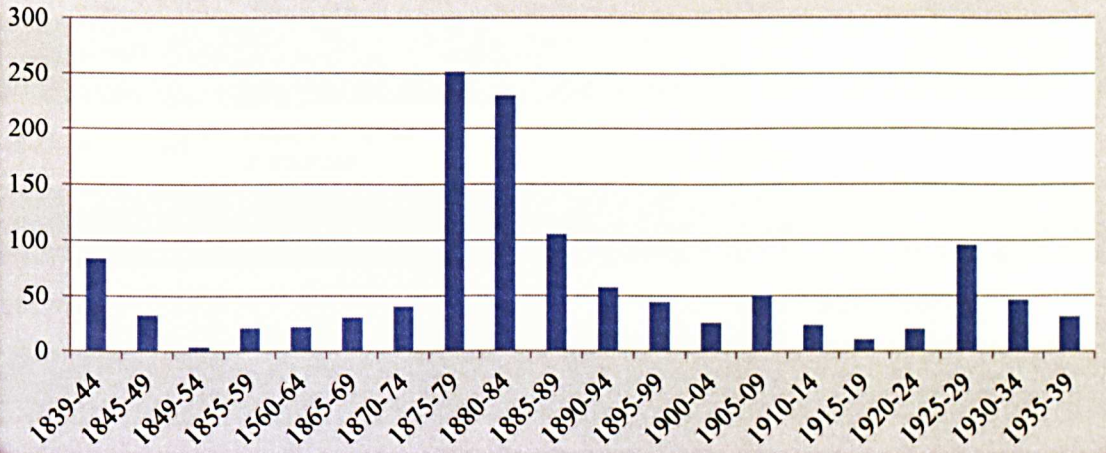
The *Times* Digital Archive 1785-2007 website

<<http://find.galegroup.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/ttda/start.do?prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=tou>> [accessed 23 December 2013 to 3 January 2014]

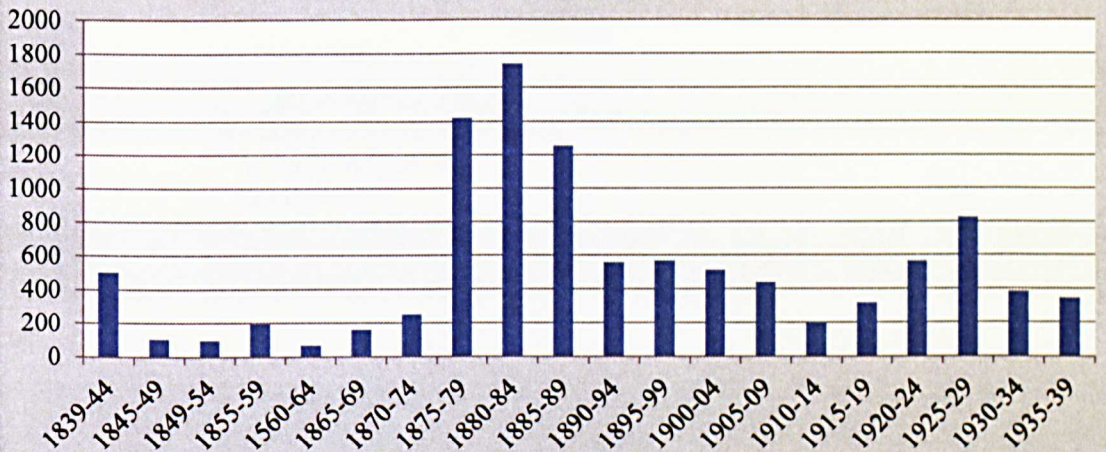
The *Daily Mail* Historical Archive 1896-2004 website

<<http://find.galegroup.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/dmha/start.do?prodId=DMHA&userGroupName=tou>> [accessed 20 December 2013]

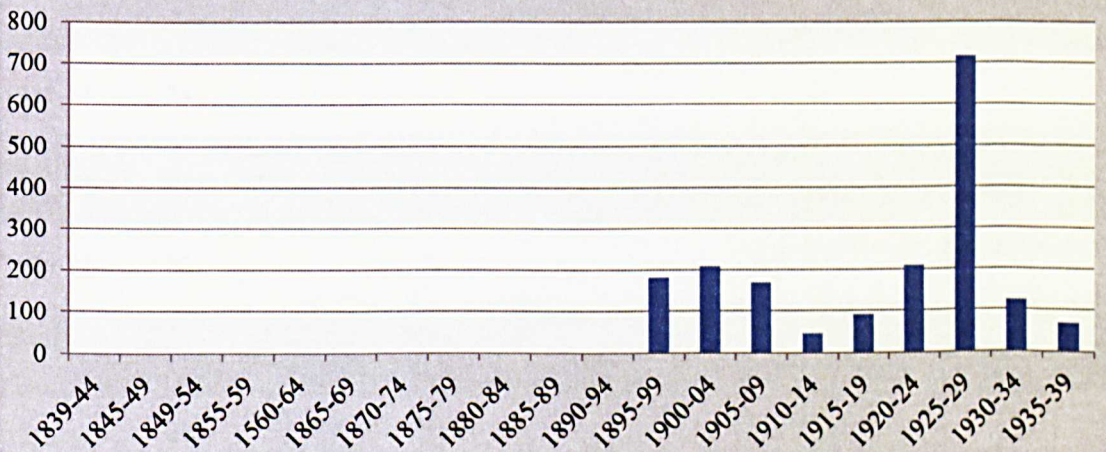
Illustrated London News



The Times



Daily Mail



<i>Illustrated London News</i> - correlation of hits with historical events				
Dates	'Hits'	Central events	Related events	Bibliography
1842-44	84	I Anglo-Afghan War & aftermath		Eyre's <i>Operations</i> , Sale's <i>Journal</i> , Kaye's articles in <i>CR</i>
1845-49	33			Kaye's <i>Engagements</i>
1849-54	4			Kaye's <i>History</i> (1st ed)
1855-59	21		'Mutiny', Crimea	Kaye's <i>History</i> (2nd ed)
1860-64	22	Herat		
1865-69	31		'Central Asian Question'	
1870-74	41		'Central Asian Question'	Kaye's <i>History</i> (3rd ed)
1875-79	252	II Anglo-Afghan War	Prince of Wales Tour of India	
1880-84	230	II Anglo-Afghan War & aftermath		
1885-89	106	Afghan Boundary Commission	Amir to durbar at Rawalpindi	Henty's <i>Name</i> , Kipling's 'King'
1890-94	58			Kaye's <i>History</i> (4th ed)
1895-99	45	Disturbances on North-West Frontier	Amir's son visit to Britain	
1900-04	26		Return of Roberts from Boer War	Kipling's <i>Kim</i> , Henty's <i>Herat & Campaigns</i>
1905-09	51		Prince of Wales Tour of India, Amir visit to India	Henty's 'Daughter'
1910-14	24			
1915-19	11	Assassination of Amir Habibullah Khan, III Anglo-Afghan War		
1920-24	20			Ganpat articles on Mahsudland in <i>BM</i>
1925-29	96	Abdication of King Amanullah Khan	King & Queen of Afghanistan to Britain	Pennell's <i>Children</i> , Ganpat's <i>Dainra</i>
1930-34	47	Assassination of King Nadir Shah		Ganpat's <i>Roads</i> , Pennell's <i>Doorways</i>
1935-39	32			Ganpat's <i>Snow Falcon</i> , Pennell's <i>Nur Bibi</i>

Ganpat - Hodder & Stoughton print & sales figures																		
Book Titles	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	Total
Lamaland	2000 988	905 10000 4062 165																2000 1893
Voice of Dashin	4500	10000	7279	776	505	290	267	671	119	48								14500
High Snow	4000	3751 4000	10000 5402	2194 10000 6836	519	257	311	580	334	136								14182
Mirror of Dreams			3730 4000	10000 3703	486	224	280	796	577	561								14000
Dainra				10000 3703	6684	290	256	537	599	650	389	232	184					14000
Speakers in Silence				4000 3517	7500 4685	1383	462	672	367									13490
Walis Have Eyes				4000 2369	1379	7500 3691	1478	1100	900	145								14000
Three R's					4000 3426	348			9800 6405	963	636	361	272	253	542	123		11500
Roads of Peace					3500 2322	988	3000 1979	789					3000 602	228	166	375	1520	11062
Marches of Honour						3500 3214	90	27	2	1	4			5500 4123	469	685		11086
Fairy Silver							4000 3358	405	6	6	10000 5721	448	235	268	458	2696		11500
Second Tigress							4000 2749	986	58	10000 6109	515	470	319	288	692			13800
Out of Evil								4000 3208	569		6							13329
Seven Times Proven									4000 2866	1114	80	5203	334	260	343			9500
Wrexham's Romance									4000 2398	1112	67	3	109					8969
Snow Falcon										4000 2737	777		258					4000
One-Eyed Knave											3500 2384	894	32	6				3772
Sleepy Duke													2500 1448	626		11		3500
War Breakers														3000 2357	445	13		2085
Total printed	10500	14000	14000	28000	15000	11000	11000	4000	17800	14000	21500	7611	5500	8500	3115	3903	1520	174800
Total sales	5050	4821	16411	19395	20006	10685	11230	9771	15200	13582	10579	7611	3793	8409	3115	3903	1520	165081

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This bibliography includes those texts that have been substantially discussed or specifically quoted in this thesis, or which have informed its background thinking. Under primary sources I have listed contemporary material such as letters, ledgers, images, commentaries or reviews that influenced - or were influenced by - fictional or non-fictional texts by my key authors, alongside the texts themselves. All subsequent commentaries and academic articles are listed under secondary sources. To give a sense of the development of each writer, multiple titles under an author's name are listed chronologically where the order is known. Where undated articles have been accessed over the Internet, the titles are listed under the date on which they were accessed (which is given in the footnotes). Newspapers and journals are listed separately where the author of the relevant article is unknown.

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